

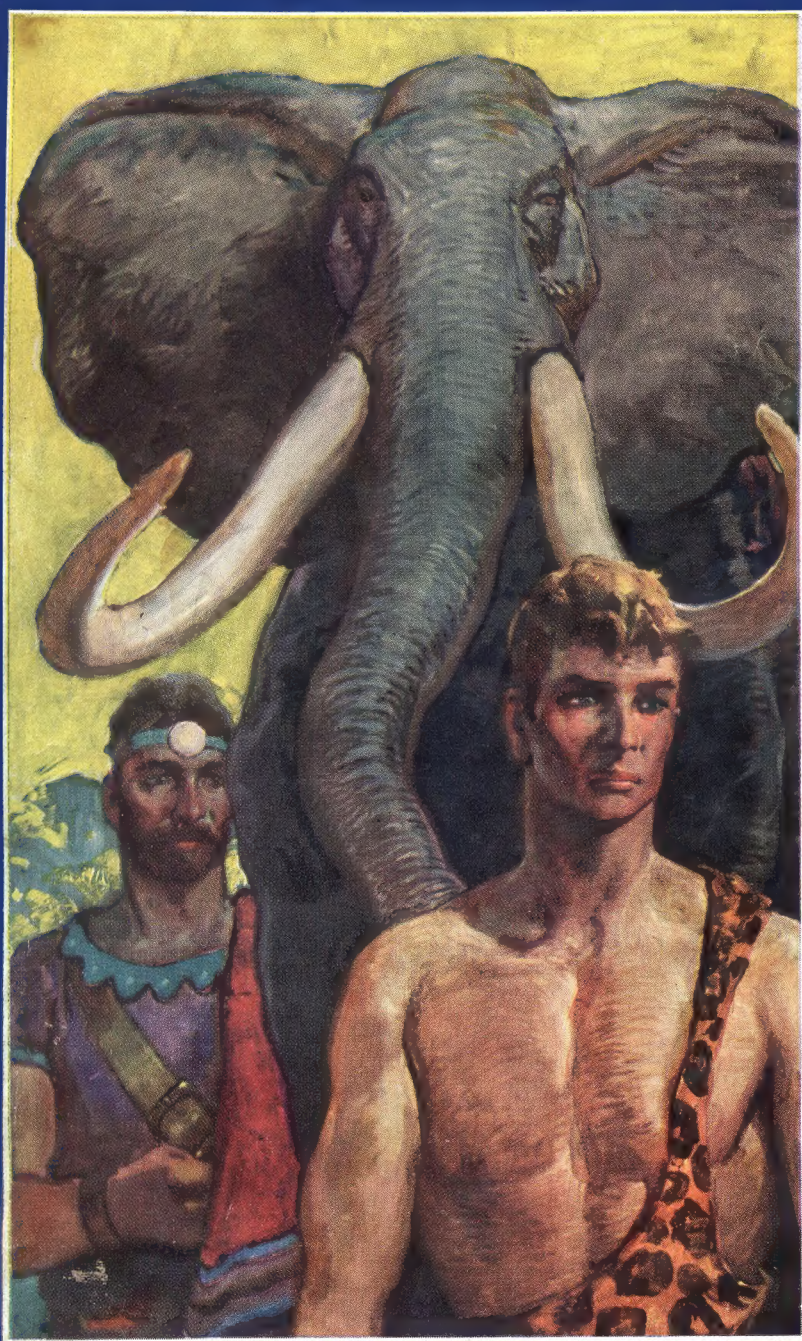
NOVEMBER 1937

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 66 No. 1

BLUE BOOK

OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE



TARZAN and TANTOR
Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

NOVEMBER
15¢

•
"Wrath
Of the Dragon"

A story of
China ablaze, by
GORDON KEYNE

•
LELAND JAMIESON
H. BEDFORD-JONES
FULTON GRANT
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•
"The Blue Oasis"
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WILLIAM J. MAKIN



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*Author of the
Red Wolf of
Arabia stories,
"Swinging the
Equator,"
"War in Ethi-
opia," "Red
Sea Nights,"
and others.*

THE gifted author of our Red Wolf of Arabia stories (don't miss "The Blue Oasis" in this issue) has an uncanny habit of tumbling into real adventures himself. He was a student in Paris when the Great War broke and subsequently served in the British Army until he was wounded and gassed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

He began a journalistic career on the Manchester *Guardian*, but for health reasons had to go abroad. Went to India, where he tumbled into the first of three revolutions he has experienced. Sitting in Rudyard Kipling's old newspaper office in Allahabad, he reported the Punjab Revolt and made his first attempts at writing fiction in the manner of the old master. He still thinks Kipling the most superb of craftsmen.

Makin developed the *Wanderlust* and went journeying through Burma and Malaya to China. Joined Sun Yat Sen and his rebel army in Canton. Saw a little fighting with brigands, and eventually landed in Mongolia, working with an American relief mission in a famine area. Eventually, being homesick, traveled from Japan across the Pacific, through the United States and back to England.

He next joined the staff of the London Daily *Mail* and worked in the foreign department under Valentine Williams, who wrote the famous Clubfoot stories. But within six months he was in South Africa and in the midst of his second civil war, the Rand Revolt of Johannesburg in 1922, with General Smuts and his forces who quelled this rebellion.

Two years later he was with the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor) big-game shooting in Central Africa. Subsequently he toured Africa from Cairo to the Cape and journeyed into Abyssinia with the Duke of Gloucester (brother to King George VI). It was following upon this mission that Makin lost himself for many months in the Red Sea regions, sailing in dhows and old freighters, and landing at many strange ports in Arabia. It was during this period that he conceived the idea of the character of the Red Wolf of Arabia, based on an individual who is still in the desert, working for the British Intelligence. "A man greater even than Lawrence of Arabia," says Makin, who also discussed his Red Sea travels with Colonel Lawrence a few months before that famous Britisher met his death on an English country road.

FROM his home in London, Makin is now devoting himself to adventure fiction, and only lays down his pen to indulge in his passion for travel. It led him a few years ago to his third revolution, in Lisbon, Portugal, where within a couple of hours of being in the city a bullet in the neck laid him low. He survived to get away to Madrid and cable the first complete story of the revolution to the English newspapers.

He has written some fifteen books, travel, adventure and crime thrillers. His latest book, on espionage in Europe and the Far East, entitled "Brigade of Spies" is to be published in the near future.



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BLUE BOOK



NOVEMBER, 1937

MAGAZINE

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A story of China today
BY WILLIAM MAKIN

A story of 1937 Spain
BY ARED WHITE

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A Wanderer's Scrapbook

A writer who has lived in thirty countries tells of his early struggles.

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

IN New York I had a hard time at first. Work wasn't plentiful, so I took a job as a street-car conductor. After five days of "breaking-in," I was given charge of a car. The motorman looked me over and put a question out of the corner of his mouth. "Are you here for the job or for what you can make?" he asked.

I didn't understand the question, so I dodged a direct answer with a grin. That grin brought me trouble. The motorman thought that I was on the cars to thief, and to help me, he "dragged the road" by keeping as far as possible from the car ahead, so that I could find plenty of passengers.

I took sixty-one dollars in fares, and I turned the money over to the clerk at one in the morning. The motorman was waiting outside the office. When I came out, he asked for his share of the money I had thieved. When I said I hadn't thieved a nickel, he said: "Wot the 'ell did yer grin for when I asked you this mornin' wot you were on for? I want five dollars for draggin' the road for yer!"

I hadn't five dollars to give, and I wouldn't stand his abuse. We went behind the car-barns. He was a well-fed husky, that motorman. He gave me the finest thrashing that any man could desire. . . .

While working for the car company I was arrested for manslaughter. Running across town at midnight, the car hit a drunk who stumbled out of a saloon doorway. A policeman arrested the motorman and tried to arrest me, but the orders of the car company to conductors were strict on one matter: Each conductor had to get the names of five witnesses to an accident; it didn't matter whether these witnesses were for or against the company. The cop ran me around and round the car while I was scribbling down the names of men who said they had seen the accident. Finally I was grabbed and taken to the police station.

I gave my name. "Where are you from, Jim?" asked the station sergeant.

"Sydney, Australia," I answered.

"Glory be to God!" said the sergeant. "My two sisters, Mary and Bridget, are living in Sydney! Tell me all about the place." He spoke to the policeman who had brought me in. "What the devil did you arrest this boy for?" he cried. "He wasn't running the car! He was on the tail end of it. It's a head of mud that you've got on your two fat shoulders! Now then, Jim, tell me what Sydney is like."

He ordered in coffee and crullers, and I stayed yarning with him till daylight. The five witnesses said the drunk met his death through his own stupidity, and the motorman was released.

ON my first morning in New York I turned down the first job offered to me in the U.S. A theatrical chap made me an offer of a dollar and a half a day to stand in costume of the twelfth century before a theater in Forty-second Street where they were playing "The Road to Yesterday." I told him I wanted the road to tomorrow.

An hour later I was wrapping circulars with twenty other men in the office of the Cananea Mining Company. It was, on account of newspaper experience, a game I was smart at, and my quickness drew a rebuke from a villainous "bum" who objected to speed. The wage of ten cents an hour in his opinion did not encourage speed, and he made spiteful remarks about my efforts.

The office boss noticed that I understood the business. At ten o'clock he spoke to me. "You get fifteen cents an hour if you can move these fellows," he said. "You're boss of the table."

"You're fired," I said to the bum who had been abusing me. I was pleased. This matched up with my dreams of America. On my first day in the country I was boss of twenty men and getting a nickel an hour extra! I worked there till ten that night, drew one dollar eighty and went back to the dosshouse. I had great dreams.

Each day for fourteen days I found a new job. Not great jobs. Sufficient for food and a bed only.

During the lunch hours I ran around the newspaper offices. Now and then I managed to speak to a reporter. I told them I was a newspaper man who had come to the U. S. to write stories. They were amused. One or two bought me a drink so that they could listen to my accent! They were good fellows, but they told me I had the same chance of writing salable stories as a Bowery bum had of becoming King of England.

Well, in thirty years, I have sold hundreds of tales to American editors.

WHILE in New York I attempted the stage. There was a music-hall on Third Avenue where one night in each week was given over to amateur try-outs. If the public liked you a lot, you (*Continued on page 144*)

Illustrated by
Grattan Condon and
Austin Briggs



CONDON.

*A not-soon-forgotten drama of China
and the dread typhoon of war.*

WRATH of the

IT was still early morning, a warm, peaceful July morning, when Glidden drove his car into Anwhan, outside and to the north of Peiping.

At the gates, he passed unmolested the squads of soldiers, who eyed him with grim unconcern. A few Japanese, officers for the most part, and Chinese in the white-banded caps of the Peace Preservation Corps. Anwhan lay within the

Tungchow district ruled by General Yin, whose P.P.C. was armed and in part officered by Japanese. The little brown brethren, in fact, held Yin in power, much as an Indian rajah or a Malay sultan is upheld by British backing.

Glidden, sweating with heat and haste, piloted his car through the narrow streets. He knew China. He had been born here. For the past three years he had held



*D*RAGON

By
GORDON
KEYNE

down the offices in Peiping of an international oil firm. He was conscious of the extreme tension here in Anwhan, of the perturbed, frantically milling people.

To force a way through the crowds became almost impossible. Glidden slowed, honked, swore, raced his engine; desperation tautened his brown face under the white topee until he was gray around the mouth. Suddenly, from a side street, the

thongs were split by a squad of Japanese troops, followed by a machine-gun company of the P.P.C., whose stolid Chinese faces blinked at Glidden and his car. The squads halted, as did Glidden. One of the officers, in Japanese uniform, came over to the side of the car.

Glidden recognized him as Bumiroff, one of the many White Russians in the Japanese service. Bumiroff was an ex-

Glidden whipped out his pistol. "Hands up, Bumiroff," he spat out, "—quickly, or—"



pert artillerist, an inventor, a valuable man.

"Oh, hello, Glidden!" he exclaimed a trifle awkwardly. "What are you doing here?"

"I ran up to get Miss Lowell out of here and back to Peiping, if she'll go," Glidden rejoined. "Passed a lot of your Japanese troops on the road. No fighting around here, is there? What's up, anyhow?"

"Nobody knows," Bumiroff asserted. "Radio communication with Tungchow ceased an hour or so ago. We don't know what the devil to think. I hear a revolt's going on in Tientsin; nothing certain. Yes, get Miss Lowell out of here at once if you can. I'm taking over the Garden of Peace in an hour, as our hospital base; I'll be glad to have her gone. In fact, I've already sent men there to post a few guns."

He hesitated—an odd thing for this man, who seldom hesitated. His hard, scarred face was troubled as he met Glidden's eyes.

"I'm damned sorry," he went on. "You seem not to know about it. Your brother was found in the city last night and ar-

rested; his execution has been delayed because he's an American, but that won't save him. He was in Peace Preservation Corps uniform. He's being held at headquarters. I'll arrange for a pass if you want to see him."

Glidden's hands tightened on the steering-wheel.

"Thanks," he said steadily. "So he's drawn his number at last, eh? I've expected it. Well—I've got to look after Miss Lowell now."

Bumiroff nodded, and eased back.

"That brother of yours, if I may say so, isn't worth your attention," he said gravely. "She is. Get her out damned quickly, if you can. See you later."

Glidden sent the car on toward the Garden of Peace, the compound where Edna Lowell, of all the missionary group, alone remained in charge, unafraid.

So Royal was nipped! And this time, it seemed, nipped for good. Poor devil! Yet Royal was, as Earl Glidden well knew, a bad egg. He had undertaken to train Chinese air-men, not for sympathy or glory, but for hard cash; he had made a wreck of his weak, self-willed, liquor-



"So you have gone crazy, too?" the Russian inquired.

sodden life for the sake of hard cash. Why had he come up here into the Japanese-controlled north, as a spy or secret agent? For hard cash, undoubtedly.

Tumult was abroad. Clashes between Chinese and Japanese had broken out; there was definite fighting at Wanping and the Marco Polo Bridge. War, it was said, had come at last. Japan was more than ready for it. China—was China ready too?

Glidden knew enough about China to be certain of nothing, except that there was going to be all kinds of hell. And it might break any moment, from any quarter. . . .

He came to the modern arch which had replaced the old-style Chinese entrance, and halted the car. A squad of soldiers stood there—grinning Chinese of the P.P.C., with two Japanese officers. They did not even accost him as he entered, afoot.

"Look after the car, will you?" he flung hurriedly at them. The men grinned again. Glidden did not like that. When the Chinese were too amiable, it boded trouble.

He hurried inside. To right and left, around the walled enclosure, were the modern and up-to-date mission and hos-

pital structures. A few soldiers were in sight. Ahead of him was the famed Garden of Peace, one of the most beautiful spots in a land whose gardens may go back to Ming days.

This one went back even farther, to the days of Kublai Khan and Marco Polo, it was said. It comprised a huge square of ground nearly a quarter-mile across in each direction. This entire square of ground, up to the very walls of the surrounding structures and wall, was a garden, Chinese style.

A few very old trees rose here and there. Clumps of bamboos of various species, even to the singular square bamboo, were interspersed with flowers, bushes, smaller trees; the air was languorous with white magnolia perfume. Everywhere was water—artificial lakes and streams, crossed by tiny bridges of artistic shapes, dotted with dwarf trees of great age, so that from most points of this garden the surrounding city was lost to sight, and one had the sensation of being far from the haunts of men.

FROM the entrance, by a highly effective trick of the forgotten designers, one had a view of the central structure. Not a straight approach; by reason of the water and bridges and broken ground, this was impossible. The view remained, however. An old low tower rose there. It must at one time have been a pagoda, far back in Mongol days, but now the upper part was gone. It was built of brick—thick, solid walls, faced on the outside with slabs of marble. About it were lovely cut marble balustrades and grotesque old stone figures of animals. The Great Peace Pagoda, it was called.

Glidden stared about at the buildings, seized with swift alarm. Not a soul was

in sight, except the few soldiers. He turned back to the guards at the entrance.

"Where is everyone?" he demanded.

"Gone," said one of the Japanese officers, in English that hissed with sibilant sound. "Sent away. It is not safe here. Servants, nurses—all gone."

"But Miss Lowell?"

"Oh!" said the officer, and hissed with politely indrawn breath and mechanical smile. "There she is."

Glidden swung around. Looking across the broken intervening ground at the pagoda, or the one remaining story of it, he saw the figure of Edna Lowell on the marble balustrade surrounding the structure.

Knowing his way here, he suppressed an oath of irritation and started off at a run. Direct approach was almost impossible, because of the water and miniature hills and terraces intervening. He had to go roundabout, over bridges and by winding paths. Almost at once, the pagoda and the woman there were lost to his sight. He was plunged within flowery dells and lovely bits of landscape, the garden-craft of centuries. Surely, he thought rather bitterly, nowhere in the world but in China, the land of great gardens, could such a place as this exist in the heart of a city. It was, at the moment, anything but pleasant to Earl Glidden, who was in the very devil of a hurry.

HE was still running when he emerged suddenly upon the lily-pond half surrounding the pagoda ruin. Edna Lowell was facing him expectantly; she was all in white, and her masses of golden bronze hair, her very blue eyes and fair skin, made a lovely and most un-Oriental picture.

"Earl! I saw you come in— Look out!" Her voice sharpened, as he was about to plunge straight across the pond in his impatience. "The water's deep there—go around!"

He stifled another oath, broke into a laugh, and went around by a charming little bridge of imitation jade. Panting, he came to a halt.

"Come along, Edna," he exclaimed. "I came to get you out of here. My car's out there, and we'd better head for Peiping in a hurry."

"Good heavens! Did you drive here at this time of the day for that?" she exclaimed. "Come along inside and have some tea and a bite to eat."

"Forget it," Glidden snapped. "Don't you know all hell is going to break loose?"

She smiled and came to him, and took his hand, patting it.

"I've heard that prediction many times lately, and it's never happened," she said, her blue eyes warming on him. "My dear, you should know me better; I'm not running. These Japs have taken over the place, and were determined that I should clear out, but I'm right here and staying. Now, no hot words, no panic, no bluster! This is my post and I'm staying to look after it. They must be expecting trouble, for they're going to use this as a hospital base; that means it'll be the safest place. Come inside."

GLIDDEN groaned a little; he knew how useless it was to argue with this woman on any question of duty. He glanced around, noting the boxes of ammunition, the machine-guns all about, even in the pagoda entrance.

"What's this? Soldiers here too?"

"Not now; I made them clear out," she rejoined. "Poor fellows, they were frightfully upset! Colonel Bumiroff had sent them here to protect me; I made them understand that I didn't want them, and it would be all right with him. You see, when I refused to go, they moved me here with my personal effects. Come in, come in. What brought you? What's happened?"

"Another incident; looks like real war this time, if the Nanking government doesn't back down," said Glidden. "The Japs are grabbing Peiping at last, I think."

He followed her inside the pagoda. In the one great open chamber, with its four narrow entrances, were piled boxes and suitcases and supplies of all descriptions; food, bottled water, more ammunition, army rations. Edna Lowell had hot tea ready in a samovar, and poured some. Glidden gulped at it gratefully.

"Dammit, are you determined on this nonsense?" he broke out desperately.

She smiled at him with her cool, calm poise that nothing seemed able to disrupt.

"Must be done, Earl. As long as I'm on the spot, this place will be respected; and remember, the property and equipment mean a lot to us. I'm in charge. The Chinese aren't going to attack the place, surely? Then there's nothing to fear, unless they should come."

"Well, there's some kind of hell due to bust loose," he growled. "Storm-warnings are out in Peiping. Jap troops are pouring up-country from Tientsin. I met Bumiroff just down the street, and for

once that inhuman scoundrel was badly stirred. He told me that they've got Royal here and mean to execute him. The poor devil must have come on some sort of secret mission."

Her smile died. She did not know Royal Glidden, but had heard plenty about him.

"Your brother, Earl! You're going to see him, to intervene—"

"Later!" Glidden snapped crisply. First, I'm going to take you to safety, and I want you to come. The legations are all arming and putting up defenses in Peiping—and—"

His words died, as he stared at her. She listened to the distant staccato voices of the milling throngs in the street.

"Machine-guns; probably a drill," she said. "Earl, you're wrong about Bumiroff being so inhuman; he's not. He's like so many of these White Russians, exiled and desperate, who have passed through the worst depths of human misery—"

It was her turn to fall silent, in surprise, as new voices broke forth, a swifter and nearer rattle of gunfire.

"You don't know anything about human misery," said Glidden, leaping up, "but you sure will if the Japs ever cut loose around here! Back under the Soviets, they had to stop killing to let the machine-guns cool off; but the Japs have a machine-gun that doesn't get hot—and a Russian invented it for them. Come on, let's see about this! That firing isn't any drill—"

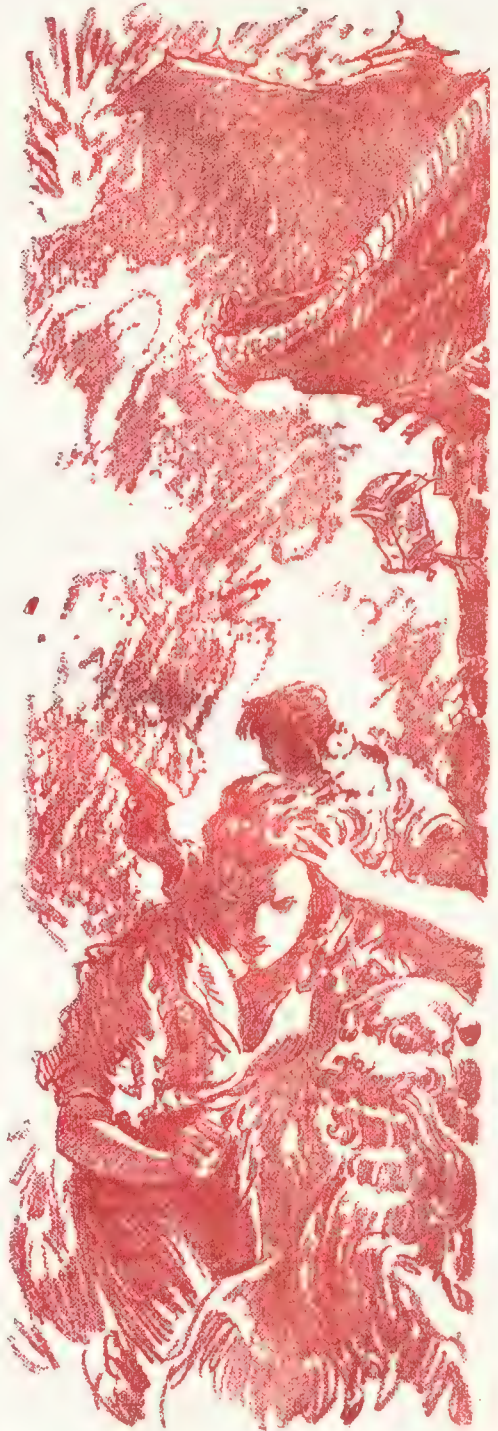
NO drill, indeed. Even before they got outside, burst upon burst of firing came from different directions. They could see nothing at all, except their one view of the entrance gates where soldiers were scurrying about. Suddenly Edna Lowell caught Glidden's arm.

"Look! Oh, it can't be, it can't be—"

A knot of Japanese soldiers came into view at a run, bayonets glittering; the knot disintegrated; the soldiers went sprawling, squirming on the ground. Volley upon volley was ringing out; the deeper chatter of a machine-gun chimed in; there was firing all around the garden itself, in the building.

And suddenly, into clear view, charged a file of soldiers, shooting down what remained of the Japanese, leaping into them with bayonets and clearing them aside. And these men wore the Peace Preservation Corps uniform.

"Good Lord! Did you see that?" gasped Glidden. "And look—"



At the entrance, a mob was abruptly in sight, raging. A barricade was being flung up; wagons, stones, a large black object—

"My car!" broke from Glidden in dismay.

A cry escaped Edna Lowell. Glidden swung around. There, at an open space

in the garden, a dozen Japanese appeared on the dead run, as though heading for the pagoda. A machine-gun began to crackle like a riveting-machine; another joined in. The group scattered and sprawled; the bullets sprayed them, whipping at the bushes, sending up puffs of dust and spurts of water. When the guns ceased, none of the figures moved again.

Glidden looked at the woman beside him. She was white as death. He was about to speak, when a whistle and a scream filled the air; lead splashed on the marble slabs and ricocheted with shrill voice in the air. Glidden caught her arm and thrust her back into the pagoda. A bullet sped through the opening and pinged into a case of supplies. He shoved her aside.

"Here—out of the line of fire," he said. "Buck up, now! We're in for it. Looks as though the P.P.C. have turned on the Japs. Well, they've got a score of bombing-planes within ten miles, not to mention tanks and artillery. And quite evidently, our Chinese friends were doing their best to pot us, so we'd better look for safety to the Japs."

As though to emphasize his words, a hail of machine-gun bullets pattered on the marble facing. It ceased abruptly. Under his white coat, Glidden had a belted pistol. He reflected whimsically that it promised to be about as much use to him as a popgun.

Suddenly came crash upon crash of firing, with new and deeper bursts. Since the fire on the pagoda had halted, Glidden ventured to take a look, half dreading to see either Japanese or Chinese charging up to seize the place.

INSTEAD, as he peered at the garden entrance, he was aware of a murderous struggle there, obscured by smoke of bombs and grenades. This cleared slightly, and the entrance itself cleared—and stayed cleared, except for the dead and what was left of the barricade there. But firing continued, hot and heavy.

The voice of Miss Lowell reached him.

"What's going on, Earl?"

"Can't tell. Keep hidden," he returned.

Suddenly he caught at his pistol and brought it out. The firing close by had ceased, or rather died down; but bursts came from elsewhere in the city. Into the sky, from some invisible point, was lifting a mushroom of smoke, betokening a fire. The air was veiled with a peculiar thin, high sound, difficult to hear yet

impinging perceptibly upon the sense: the screaming voices of thousands of persons, blended in multitudinous agony and terror.

But from somewhere near at hand came the tramp of feet; two figures appeared, one supporting the other. Glidden stared, and lowered his pistol. The two were alone. Bumiroff, begrimed, a smear of blood across one side of his face, was aiding a Japanese captain, shorter by a head, whose right leg was drenched with blood.

"Oh, hello!" exclaimed the Russian casually, in his fluent English. "Thought you were finished off long ago, Glidden. Give us a hand, like a good fellow."

"Come inside, inside!" Edna Lowell appeared. She was still calm, Glidden noted, as he aided the little captain into the pagoda. "I'll take care of him," she went on, quite without excitement. "I've everything here. —Colonel Bumiroff, you're hurt?"

A SHORT, harsh laugh came from Bumiroff.

"No; barely scratched," he answered. "Miss Lowell, may I present Captain Isuke? He speaks no English, but he understands a little. I think it's merely a flesh wound."

"What the devil is up?" demanded Glidden, producing cigarettes. The Russian accepted one, and lit it. His eyes, quite without emotion, like the eyes of a man who has already been through hell and is astonished at nothing, rested on Miss Lowell as she bandaged the badly torn upper leg of the silent, uncomplaining captain.

"We just had word from Tungchow," he returned. "There, a hundred Japanese are holding out desperately. The messenger had barely reached us, when the mutiny began here, as it has begun everywhere in the province. The Peace Preservation Corps," he said, with a bitter and sardonic air, "has undertaken to destroy the Japanese."

"But here—outside here!" Glidden motioned. "What's going on?"

"Most of us have been destroyed," said Bumiroff. "Part of a column had just entered town, however; they hold a corner of the garden, here. And now it'll be a fight, for a little while. I am the only one who knows precisely what will happen here. Never mind; we shall not die for another hour or two."

He glanced at Glidden, then at Miss Lowell, in a peculiar manner.

"I'm sorry," he added, almost gently for him. "I suppose it's really my duty to shoot you both, but I don't think that will be necessary."

"Eh?" Glidden scowled at him. "Shoot us? Are you out of your head?"

"No more than usual." Bumiroff smile his hard, mirthless, scarred smile. "I don't mind telling the truth, since none of us are going to remain alive. It is quite necessary, from the Japanese standpoint, that any Americans here should be killed. This will be blamed on the Chinese, with very desirable consequences. You see, Japan wishes your country to declare that a state of war exists here; then no shipments of arms will be made. We don't need them. The Chinese do. I think our position is clear?"

Edna Lowell looked up, her eyes wide.

"You're joking, Colonel Bumiroff. It's no time for such grim jokes—"

"I am entirely in earnest," said the tall Russian with a shrug. He was indifferent, casual, entirely collected. He had not bothered to do anything about his wounded head. Glidden perceived that he was quite in earnest, as he averred. So did the woman.

"Why, that's preposterous!" she exclaimed sharply, pausing in her work.

"It's nothing of the sort," Glidden corrected her. "On the contrary, Bumiroff is giving us a bit of inside information. Why," and he shot a quick look at the tall man, "why do you say that we shall all be dead?"

Bumiroff puffed at his cigarette and smiled his thin, sardonic smile.

"That will appear in due course," he rejoined.

SUDDENLY Glidden wakened, as the eyes of a man waken when death is at his elbow. He had thought Bumiroff inhuman; now he saw his mistake. He had encountered many of these White Russians, people who had seen their families massacred, who had waded through torrents of blood in Siberia, who had become calloused to suffering, torture and murder.

Now Glidden perceived that this Russian was not inhuman; Edna Lowell had been right. The man was merely deprived of all sympathy or emotion; only one thing mattered to him—his own life.

And with this, Glidden whipped out his pistol. His eyes blazed; his voice shook as he spat out swift words.

"Hands up, Bumiroff—quickly, or—"

His grip tightened. The startled Russian saw it, saw death in the hot gray eyes, and put his hands into the air.

"So you have gone crazy too?" he inquired.

"I'm taking no chances on what you might do, what you would do. Edna! Take his pistol. Unbutton the holster—that's right. Now take the pistol from Captain Isuke. Give 'em both to me."

Miss Lowell obeyed rather blankly. Glidden's sudden explosion, his blazing eruption of energy, his unexpected burst of vitality and action, lifted him into abrupt dominance of the position. Captain Isuke, his wound now bandaged, leaned back against a pile of suitcases and blinked helplessly. The other two stared, as Glidden took the two pistols from the woman and flung them through the nearest doorway into the pool.

HE had seen in a flash the truth of Bumiroff's words. The Japanese would stop at nothing to alienate foreign sympathy from the Chinese, in this crisis; the murder of any Americans, blamed upon the Chinese, would be of inestimable advantage to them. The entirely selfish character of Bumiroff, cynical beyond credence, had opened his eyes to the actual danger involved. He swung around and eyed the three; when Bumiroff started to speak, Glidden cut him short with a blast of words.

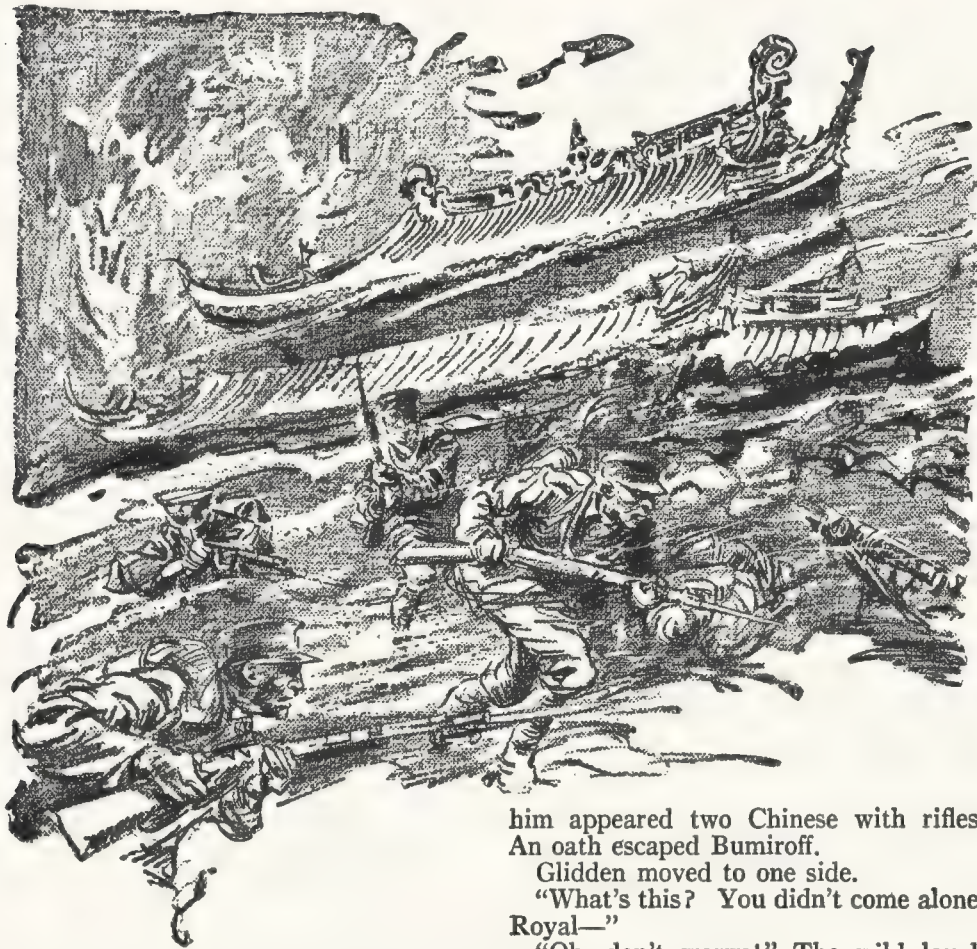
"My life's important to me; I'll take care of it myself. If you stay here, Bumiroff, you're doing as I say. I'm no Chinese, to submit tamely to anybody's dominance and accept a bullet as a gift of destiny. I'm guiding my own destiny around here, and if there's any killing to be done, I'll have a hand in it."

Edna Lowell was still staring at him in astonishment and growing realization. Bumiroff smiled, a wearily satiric smile, but again he was cut short before he could speak—this time by a wild burst of laughter, and a new voice:

"Spoken like a hero, my dear Earl! And I'll back you up in it. You've saved me from taking a hand myself in this absurd situation."

Glidden glanced aside, startled. His pistol jerked up, then stopped.

A ragged, dirtied figure, its head bandaged, its shreds of uniform recognizable only by its white Chinese leggings, had appeared around the opposite entrance. Glidden knew the voice. He knew that drawn and dissipated face, the reckless eyes below the bandage. Bumiroff recog-



nized it also, put a hand to his empty holster, and dropped it.

"Royal!" broke out Earl Glidden. "I thought you were put away for keeps!"

"And not a damned bit sorry, either, eh?" sneered Royal. He was unarmed. "Well, I've been listening to your charming conversation, and it's enough to make a jackass laugh. So the Japs want to do you in, eh? Well, my good friends, the Peace Preservation Corps also wants to do you in, and me into the bargain, and for precisely the same reason—to cast the blame on the other fellow. Me, a ranking colonel in their own blasted army—can you beat it? That's what we get for being Americans, with our pacifist government. Europe wants our money and Asia wants our blood— Ah, I perceive you have a nurse! Nurse, I salute you; Colonel Royal Glidden of the Nanking army. If you have any iodine, I'd be glad of your attentions. I have a slash across the brain-pan, and it hurts."

He lurched into the chamber and dropped onto a packing-case. Behind

him appeared two Chinese with rifles. An oath escaped Bumirossoff.

Glidden moved to one side.

"What's this? You didn't come alone, Royal—"

"Oh, don't worry!" The wild laugh sounded again. "I got free when the scrap started. The Chinese wanted to wipe me out; luckily, these two men are loyal to Nanking, and my money. They helped me get clear. —Please, nurse!"

As Royal spoke, he unwound the bandage, to display a ragged scalp-wound. Miss Lowell moved at once to his side, mechanically. Glidden, irresolute, encountered the mocking smile of Bumirossoff.

"Apparently," said the Russian with perfect *sang-froid*, "we're all in the same boat here. No matter who attacks this place, we all get our throats cut. Captain Isuke and I may be in no danger from the Japanese, but—"

"But you have my pistol to think about, and you'd better think about it," Glidden snapped.

"Precisely. May I suggest that a friendly truce would be in order?"

"Good idea," grunted Royal, under Edna Lowell's ministrations. "Believe me, hell's going to be let loose around here."

"More than you know, perhaps," Bumirossoff commented darkly. "I suppose our

men will be coming over to occupy this place any minute."

"Guess again," snapped Royal. "Ouch! I happen to know our men—or what used to be my side—will be occupying it themselves, as soon as they get rid of your Japs. . . . So, my dear brother, you don't rejoice that I'm alive and in your midst?"

"Don't be a fool," Glidden rejoined harshly. "I'm thinking of myself and Miss Lowell, not you. No use having a lot of false palaver; there's no time for it. I'm glad you're alive, yes; but I'm



"Beasty old weapons!" ejaculated Bumiroff. "We should have our new-type gun."

running this show. If those men of yours start anything, they get drilled. So far as anybody's occupying this place is concerned, we're here ourselves, we have machine-guns and no end of ammunition, plenty of supplies, and we can stay right here until things get safer."

"Excellent!" Royal exclaimed. His head neatly bandaged, he rose and turned to the woman. "Miss Lowell, eh? Thank you for your first aid. Earl, what you say is O. K. by me. I'm with you, and we can count on those two men of mine. They're southern Chinese and hate the northern brand like poison."

Again that lightly mocking smile swept the scarred, hard features of Bumiroff.

"I know a born leader when I see him." He turned to Glidden as he spoke. "Count on me and Captain Isuke, at your

command, sir. You can hardly expect us to fire on our own people. Otherwise, for the time left to us, we're with you."

"Agreed. That's twice you've mentioned imminent death for us all," said Glidden. "Why? What do you expect?"

"Tell you later." And the Russian shrugged. "We have an hour or so to live, I think."

"All right. Which side of the garden do the Japanese hold?"

Bumiroff listened to the intermittent rifle-fire and bursts of machine-guns.

"Apparently the situation's unchanged. The northeast angle."

"Then you and your friend man a gun on the south side of the pagoda—there are two out there," said Glidden. "I'll lend you a hand; we can answer for both machine-guns. Royal, you and your two sons of Han take the opposite guns, outside. Have you any compunctions about firing on your late friends?"

"To a drowning pup all cats look gray," Royal rejoined cheerfully. "Lucky there are guns inside each entrance here—if it gets too hot outside, we can retire. Any liquor on hand? Ah! Brandy; that's the ticket."

Seizing a bottle from an open case, he sauntered out to his two men. They were chattering excitedly. His voice came back with a startled yelp.

"Earl! Hop to it, you and those two Japs—the P.P.C. is coming on the jump!"

"Thanks for calling me a Jap," snarled Bumiroff. He and Captain Isuke were already moving. Glidden, with a gesture bidding Edna Lowell stay where she was, darted outside to join them.

ABRUPTLY, in the sunlight outside, he found himself plunged into crisis and horror. Bumiroff was settling himself at a machine-gun; an old type, a Lewis belt-feed. Captain Isuke had toppled over and lay squirming on the marble flags. Coming across the spaces of the garden, so close as to be apparently within reach, was an outspread rush of figures—Chinese, bayonets glinting, flooding among the flowers and clumps, leaping the little bridges, a few of them pausing to fire at the pagoda as they came.

And as a background, a whining far in the air, a crash upon crash, as shells burst somewhere in the city outside. Artillery was at work, Japanese artillery from outside the walls, no doubt.

All this in a split-second flash. Then Glidden was helping Bumiroff with the heavy belt, holding it to feed evenly; the gun began to roar and jump. From the other side of the pagoda came the hammering, thudding explosions of two other guns, where Royal and his men were at work.

"Beastly old weapons, these," ejaculated Bumiroff, quite coolly. "We should have one or two of our own new-type gun—no recoil, no heating."

The words were punctuated by deafening bursts.

Bullets were puffing from the marble slabs, whanging off through the air. Glidden was too intent on his job to notice. From the corner of his eye, he saw that

the charge had scattered; when at length Bumiroff ceased firing and demanded a new belt, he could get a full look. It left him gasping.

The ranks were gone. In the gaps of shrubbery, figures kicked and sprawled. A few dozen men remained, making a pitiful attempt to charge across the badly broken ground. They dropped to flounder in the water of the winding lake, or went rolling. Others had taken to cover and were opening a hot fire on the pagoda.

With this, Royal's guns ceased stuttering. Bumiroff calmly opened up, spraying the water and flower-clumps relentlessly. Bullets sang around; from some point of the wall, a machine-gun opened. It fired too high; from the upper portion of the pagoda blew out a dust of hits. The Russian glanced up, his face impassive.

"Time to quit here," he said.

Captain Isuke was on his feet now. He shoved Glidden roughly aside and took the belt; as he did so, a *thud-thud-thud* sounded. His face disappeared in a red mass, and he pitched forward over the marble balustrade, hanging there like a limp doll.

Bumiroff went for shelter in a dive. Glidden followed; he was no sooner inside, than bullets were spurting in at this entrance. The Russian moved over a case of tinned food, heaved another on top of it, and stood wiping sweat from his lean cheeks. Machine-gun bullets went *pot-pot-pot* against the marble slabs on this side of the pagoda, smashing now and again into the cases blocking the entrance. Outside, above the cases, Glidden caught a glimpse of Captain Isuke's body stirring like a scarecrow flapping in a windstorm, as the passing bullets plumped into it.

GLIDDEN turned to Edna Lowell. She was unhurt, but looked like death itself, her eyes dilated in a bloodless face. Her poise was gone now; a bewildered horror lay in her expression.

"Got any grub here?" Royal came bursting in, excited, wild-eyed, his voice shrilling up. "We stopped 'em, all right. My two men are standing guard. I haven't had anything to eat today, blast it! What's that?"

A roar was sweeping through the air. Glidden darted to the north entrance and looked out. Planes were vibrating, rushing across the sky.

Bumiroff joined him and grunted.

"Bombers. Been up at Tungchow, eh? They'll get fresh loads and be back here. Better get some grub, if you want it."

"Don't be a fool," said Glidden roughly. "No bombing here. Not with so many of your own troops in the city."

The Russian vented one harsh, sardonic laugh, and turned back. Glidden found him and Royal opening up some food, while Miss Lowell replenished the samovar; going to her, Glidden patted her shoulder.

"Don't be scared, my dear," he said gently. "This place was positively made for the job; nobody can rush us from any angle. Here: have a cigarette and buck up."

She accepted. "I—everything's gone to pieces, Earl," she said in a dull tone. "I had no idea it was possible."

ROYAL'S two Chinese hustled in and out, with ammunition and drums. All the machine-guns save the one were Brownings, drum-fed, easily handled by one man, at a pinch.

Bumiroff laughed again when Edna Lowell produced china cups for the tea. Tinned meat and biscuit and fruit were produced and Royal gulped from another bottle of brandy; the tapping of bullets on the tower died down into occasional bursts of shots.

"That," said the Russian, his mouth full, "ended their eagerness. Eat something, Miss Lowell! It's probably your last chance. Here, dump some brandy in your tea—that's what you need. Glidden, when my men decide to take this place, work the gun yourself; don't worry about my helping them. I'll do nothing. When they do come, they'll make a better job of it than those poor devils of Chinese did."

The girl obeyed blindly, mechanically; she seemed frozen, stricken. Presently she lifted inquiring eyes to Glidden.

"It'll soon be over?" she murmured. "They—they'll drive out the Chinese; then we'll be safe? They won't really want to hurt us?"

"No," said Bumiroff, breaking in before Glidden could speak. "I think the Japanese will come to take this place; it will be impossible if these machine-guns are well handled. That will end one stage. Then will come the final stage, when we all die."

"Are you out of your head?" Glidden said angrily.

"Nonsense! Stop asking that silly question." Bumiroff turned to him al-

most gayly, with a frank, friendly smile. "Listen! I know what is coming, here. We have not enough men to take the city, you comprehend? That is, inside it. A few companies, no more. Well, I have seen the plans of the staff. They are simple. Every place not in our hands, around Peiping, is to be bombed into nothing; each concentration point is to be totally destroyed. The severe lesson will be enough."

Miss Lowell stared at him, aghast.

"You can't mean it! You don't know what you say—all these thousands of innocent people—"

"Bah!" exploded Royal. "Forget that baloney. We're past all that."

The tall Russian stood up. He broke into a vehemence of talk; the racial trait came out abruptly, violently. But now, in his speech, was a frightful and terrible truth. It shone coldly through his words. He might have been a robot, so far as any emotion lay in his words.

"We can afford to drop all the customary twaddle of civilization—about consuls and rights and protection. Bah! We mean nothing to the world any more. These Chinese in their squalid thousands mean nothing. We, all of us, are like ants pressed out beneath the foot of a giant—human life is worthless in the progress of nations. I have seen my own people die by the tens of thousands; here in China people will die by the hundreds of thousands; and China will win."

"WHAT do you mean by that?" asked Glidden. "That China will simply absorb these Japs, as it has absorbed all its conquerors?"

"No. I mean China will win this war—if she keeps at it. Look! All this trouble here, all the wild unrest in Europe, springs from what? The execution of the Soviet generals by Stalin. With their destruction, the Soviet army fell into chaos. China had been depending on a Russian alliance, in case of war with Japan. It was worthless. France and other European nations had likewise depended on Russia—now a broken reed! So Japan has struck here. She will wound China vitally, terribly; she'll strike hard at Shanghai and the coast too, with the help of her navy. She'll take all the north and forming a puppet empire under Kang Teh the Manchu—but China will eventually win the war, if she keeps at it."

"Right," burst out Royal. "But who gives a hang? Not I. So you think

we'll be bombed out of existence by your precious planes, eh? Regardless of your own men here?"

"Of course. What are a few lives, to the spread of empire?" declaimed the Russian. "This Garden of Peace, with its boasted philanthropy and medical work and mission—bah! Our fine projects, our trade, our customs, our religions, our social systems—forgotten. The world is in chaos, in rebirth, my friends! In every country, our economics are failing; even in Japan, where strikes and communism and rebellion threaten—"

"Right, right!" cried Royal wildly.

"You're a pair of fools," struck in the level, scornful voice of Glidden. "Oh, I grant you have the right of it, perhaps! Speak the truth like a dying man, eh? Very well, take it! I'm here to keep the life of this woman whom I love, and of myself, in our two bodies. Plague take your social systems and all the other rot you spout! Plague take your patter, your fine vocabularies, all the rest of it. The whole thing simmers down to the one basic fact: *I intend to fight for my own! Kill you?*" He snarled suddenly. "I'd as soon pistol the lot of you right now, if need were. You,"—and he whirled on his brother,—"*you who have dragged our name in the mud for years, if it comes down to elementals, you can go first. I stay, by the Lord! And you, Bumiroff, killer and wastrel, with your own skin the only thing you live for—that goes for you as well. Lie down and accept your bombing and your predestined death? To hell with all that! I'll fight, and I've got brain and hands to fight with as well!*"

THE outburst left him breathless and shaken, glaring, furious. The tall Russian eyed him curiously, and then bowed.

"I respect you, Mr. Glidden; you have everything to fight for. I long ago lost everything, except my own sorry existence. You are, as you put it, elemental—the elemental brute, with all a man's brain. I salute you; Miss Lowell also."

But Edna Lowell, with a frightened cry, had put her face in her hands and was weeping spasmodically.

Glidden gave her a look.

"Snap out of it, my dear!" he said. "Cry over all lost illusions later on, if you like—right now, we have to act. Listen! What's up, Royal?"

"Charge of the Light Brigade, I think." And Royal uttered his wild laugh. "Come on! Those men of mine—"

They were chattering wildly, calling him forth. He rushed out. Glidden followed, his brain awl; the morning sunlight was wan with smoke from the stricken town roundabout, where shells were still bursting.

ALMOST before he knew it, he was at a machine-gun, fumbling, adjusting the drum; it began to jump and stutter under his hands. Beside him, chips flew from the marble balustrade; the delicately carved stone flew apart. Japanese had brought up a machine-gun, and another. Stocky helmeted figures were darting forward on two sides, straight across the broken ground in a wide sweep, taking all obstacles in their stride, splashing through the artificial lake, darting from clump to clump of bushes and dwarf trees.

A marble flinder smashed into Glidden's head, another raked across his cheek; the blood was warm and sticky, but he felt no hurt. That was the closer machine-gun, its fire ranging upon him. Suddenly the men about it fell away and crumpled. His own gun, or that of Royal, had found the mark. Dirt showered around it; it turned topsy-turvy and bullets shredded it as it pointed upward.

But the Japanese were coming forward. Their second gun was hammering viciously, and Glidden turned his weapon on it. He had found the trick again, learned at home with the R.O.T.C. The quick, short bursts, the hammer of sustained fire—and that second gun went the way of the first.

The stocky little men were sweeping on. Rifles began to crackle all along their front; they fired, ran on, flung flat to fire again. Royal's voice, from around the corner of the pagoda, rose shrill and high. Glidden's weapon fell silent. Frantically he reached for another drum and adjusted it, awkwardly, panic upon him. They were close, so close he could see the set, grinning brown faces, the rolling eyes. The other guns had fallen silent. Glidden worked desperately.

His gun began to speak again. Another joined in. Two Japanese on the imitation jade bridge were caught together and crumpled there, jamming the little structure. Others were in the pool just beyond the balustrade, going in out of their depth, swimming, coming on. His jumping, stuttering, blistering gun hammered at them. Nothing moved there now; the slow still water was turning to red. On to the left, where the

garden seemed to crawl with figures, the spurts of his bullets pounded and tore. The little trees were rent asunder, the flowers and bushes were swept by a leaden hail.

Then, all of a sudden, silence here close at hand. Glidden pressed the blood out of his eyes and blinked; the hot gun made the air above it dance. No more Japanese! That deadly sweeping fire had shattered them.

Glidden jumped up. He darted around the corner of the structure and checked himself violently. Royal was nowhere in sight. One of the two Chinese lay face down, dead. The other had reloaded his machine-gun and was trying to fire it. He could not. He turned a gasping, contorted face to Glidden and tried to speak. A bubble of blood came from his lips; then his head jerked down. With a slow, sweeping motion he toppled over and lay beside his companion.

Glidden became conscious of bullets all around. Something tore at his coat; he looked down in surprise. The white pongee was shredded and dangling, as though cut by a knife. A crimson smear of blood was creeping across the white. Bullets, shrill voices somewhere close—

Then Glidden saw them. Four or five Japanese, no more; they were splashing through a curve of the artificial lake, firing as they came. They were not thirty yards away—the last remnants of that stubborn attack. Glidden still wore his sun-helmet; suddenly it was torn from his head by invisible singing fingers.

Deliberately, he stepped over the two dead Chinese and took place at the machine-gun. Under his hand, the still hot

weapon began to jump and stutter. Carefully, he swept the water and the advancing group. The little knot of stocky brown men disappeared; the spray spurted from the bullets became red. Not a man of that attacking force had come through, and not a man would.

Glidden left the gun. He turned stiffly to the nearest entrance and went inside the pagoda; the sudden transition from sunlight to shadow blinded him for an instant, and his whole chest hurt. He was feeling the wound, now.

"We've done it, I guess," he said. "Where's Royal?"

He became aware of Bumiroff, helping Edna Lowell to adjust a bandage on the tattered figure. Royal's voice leaped at him.

"Hello! Finished it, did you? Good work. I stopped a hot one, but this damned Russian pulled me inside. There, that's fine, thanks—"

Glidden found the woman staring at him.

"Earl, what's wrong? Oh! My dear, my dear, come quick!" Her voice broke. She ran at him, forced him to sit down, wiped the blood from his face and fell to work. "Get that shirt off—quick!"

Royal, seated at a machine-gun, waved a hand, urging them away. . . . They stumbled on. The hammer—hammer of the gun sounded like a pulse of death.



She daubed stinging iodine on the long, ragged wound, where a bullet had ripped across his chest; she was coolly efficient once more. Bumiroff winked at Glidden, got out cigarettes and poured tea from the samovar. After sipping his own with relish, he forced a cup on Miss Lowell, handed Glidden another.

"You were right, both of you." With a weary air, Edna Lowell put her cup aside. "What do dreams, illusions, duty and all such things, matter—now?"

"Not a bit," the Russian said calmly. "So you beat back the clever little brown men, eh? At a price. Just as we beat back the Chinese. Neither will try again. But remember it was I who put those guns here! Given a little more time, I'd have made something of this place. They started to kill us too soon, and caught us off guard."

He swaggered outside. Royal came to one elbow, with his wild laugh.

"Well, we're not dead yet! I'll be on my feet whenever necessary; can't keep a good man down."

DISREGARDING him, Glidden took the girl's hand, drew her to him and looked into her face.

"Thanks, my dear. You look different; afraid?" he asked gently.

"Not now." Something of her old serenity had come back into her wide-eyed face. "Just forced to realize how little and puny we are, Earl. We just don't matter at all; nothing matters."

He pressed her hand.

"Cheer up. We'll pull through somehow. We'll find a place where there's no more war and killing—"

Royal's voice cut in scathingly.

"Yah! All you fools think alike; you all say that. You don't grasp that the world's gone crazy. It's changing. All your boasted civilization isn't worth a cocked hat any more. Do you know that down south, the Nanking government is more than ready for this scrap? A fact. Russian planes and advisers, munitions, everything! When it's all over, this part of China will be a desert, but the Japs will be wiped clean. Wait and see—"

Glidden paid no heed, but smiled a little as Miss Lowell's fingers clung to his. A silence fell—silence, except for the queer thin roar lifting from the city all around, a wide, deep sound of human agony. The shell-bursts had ceased.

"You'd better come out here!" sounded the voice of Bumiroff. "You'll see something—"

His voice, excited for once, died away suddenly, as though he had glimpsed something so incredible that it silenced him. So, in fact, he had.

"Stay here." Glidden rose stiffly, agonized by his hurt. "Let me go out—"

"No, my dear, we stay together now," said Edna Lowell quietly. She aided him, took his arm. "Come along. The open air's better. What does the danger matter? I'm stifled in here."

Slowly, they passed outside together. Glidden glanced around, seeing nothing of the tall Russian; then Miss Lowell's clutching hand, her startled cry, showed him the truth. No bullets were buzzing here now. Yet Bumiroff, perhaps struck by some chance messenger of death, was sitting against the building, quiet and dead; upon his face was a smile such as Glidden could not have imagined possible to this man, a smile of peace and relaxation.

"Look!" The word burst from him as he glanced up. "There they are!"

The hum in the air grew to a vibrant roar, filling the whole sky. The two of them, arm in arm, stood staring and forgetful of all else.

Planes, huge bombers; a dozen of them, a score of them, trailing from down the horizon, and so incredibly low that they seemed almost within touch. The nearest was overhead. As it passed, just to their right, came spouting explosions from the city, and dull heavy roars as bombs dropped. The planes were turning, circling.

A little moan came from Edna Lowell; she trembled, and Glidden slipped his arm around her, as the earth began to shake. They looked at the entrance to the garden. And, as they looked, a blinding flash erupted, a dark geyser of earth shot up. Then the concussion reached them; but the whole entrance had disappeared.

"They're efficient, you bet!"

GLIDDEN looked around. Royal had come out and was steadying himself against the chipped marble balustrade. His face was gray, and the bandage about his chest was soaked in scarlet. His eyes were on the planes.

"Bumiroff was right," he went on shrilly. "Look! By God, they're deliberately bombing the whole place into destruction—"

A terrific explosion shook them all, shook the pagoda; from somewhere in the garden, water and earth and bodies

were spewed up as the bomb landed. Then Glidden found Royal beside them, clawing frantically at them, voice rising feverishly.

"Get out of here! Earl, take her away from here, quick! You fool, don't you see that they'll drop a bomb here on this tower next? It's the only thing showing. They won't waste bombs on the garden around—just bare ground. But they'll blow this place to Kingdom Come, any minute now! Get out there among the bushes and lie down. You'll be safe, except from a direct hit—that isn't likely."

"Right." Glidden saw the wisdom of this advice, and stirred. "Come on, Edna. Grab a blanket and some grub—quick! *Quick!*"

AS she disappeared inside the pagoda, Glidden turned to his brother.

"Can you walk? All right. I'll give you a hand—"

"Shut up, you fool. I've got mine." The gray face was leaden, now; the reckless eyes blazed. "I know my business, and those Japs are too damned confident nobody can hurt 'em. Flying too low. You get her safe away. Keep clear of the big trees; stick to the bushes, between here and the wall. You've got a chance, just a chance, but a good one. How you'll get clear later, I don't know; that's your funeral. Hope you do it, old man. Good luck to you—"

"But you're not staying here?" broke in Glidden.

"You bet I am!" Royal laughed weakly. His hand came out. "Luck!"

Glidden gripped it, looked into the dying face, and then joined Edna Lowell as she emerged, laden down. She glanced irresolutely at Royal.

"He's not coming," said Glidden. "Give me those blankets."

She nodded. "No, he's terribly hurt. We'll have to leave him—"

He shoved her away, stumbling after her. From the air above, the vibration of planes roaring down the sky was deafening; from the city around, came burst upon burst of exploding bombs. Oddly enough, except for mounting gushes of smoke, they could see nothing, for the trees and high bushes narrowed their horizon.

At the imitation jade bridge, Glidden forced aside the figures of the two Japanese who had died there. They fell into the water. He pressed Edna Lowell across, and on the far side, before plung-

ing into the bushes, flung a last glance back at the pagoda.

Royal had seated himself at a machine-gun, was elevating it to point upward. He saw the two of them and waved a hand, urging them on and away. Then the gun began to shake and jump. The planes overhead were so low, so close, that the brown dots of faces in them could be clearly descried. Gasping realization of his purpose broke on Glidden.

"He's taking a last shot—making sure they'll know where to plant their bombs! Run for it! *Run!*"

The flowers and bushes closed around them. They stumbled on and on. Glidden caught a glimpse of buildings at last, the buildings of the mission along the wall; smoke was pouring from them.

"Duck!" he panted. "We're about halfway to the wall—here, in among those bamboos!"

A thick, dense clump of bamboos rose just ahead. Glidden forced a way in among them. He dropped his burden, forced Edna Lowell down, dropped gasping beside her. All the while, the *hammer-hammer-hammer* of Royal's gun sounded like a pulse of death. Through the leafy crests of the bamboos, Glidden caught sight of a bomber fluttering erratically across the sky, apparently falling on top of them—fluttering on and gone, no doubt to plunge among the spouting ruins of the town. Instinctively he waited, strained to catch the explosion, among the rocking crepitations going on all around. That thin, high, queerly horrible sound of human agony had ceased.

SUDDENLY the earth shook under them, and again. Upon the shuddering roars, fell a strained silence, until earth and stones began to shower around. The stuttering of the machine-gun had ceased entirely. Everything had ceased, it seemed, except the vibrant thunder from the sky.

Glidden knew the pagoda was gone.

Edna Lowell shivered and clung to him; he tightened his arms around her, and drooped his face to the masses of golden-bronze hair.

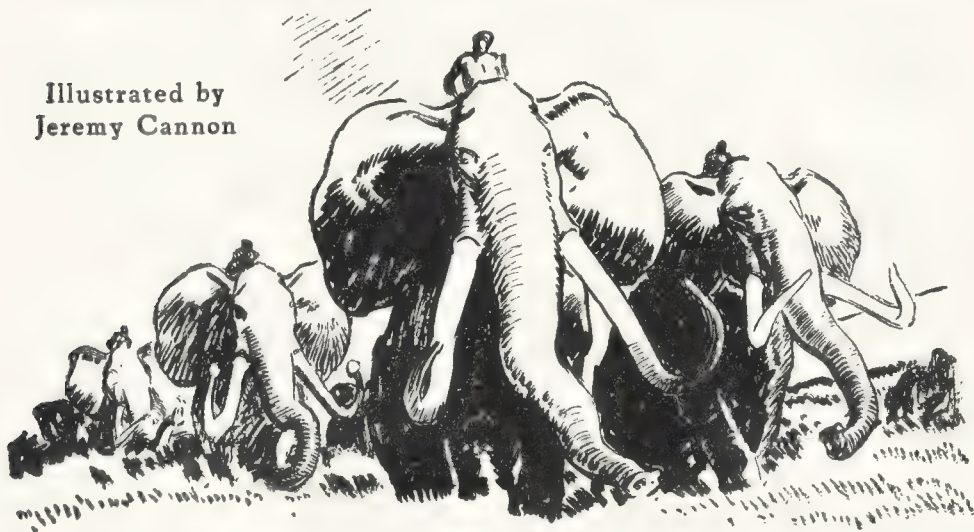
"Cry it out, my dear, cry it out," he said quietly. "Nothing to do now but to wait. We'll be all right—somehow—"

He caught sight of the watch on his wrist and stared at it, incredulous. Yes, it was running. He could not believe the fact, until he lifted it to his ear.

It was a scant forty minutes since he had reached the pagoda.

TARZAN and the

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



PERHAPS you will recall a Reuter's dispatch of a year or more ago announcing the success of the Wood and Van Eyk African Expedition in solving the mystery of the disappearance of Lord and Lady Mountford more than twenty years before, and of the rescue of their daughter Gonfala, queen of the warrior-women of Kaji.

The article mentioned the fact that Lord Greystoke had been largely instrumental in effecting the release not only of Gonfala but of the entire expedition and numerous slaves and captives, from the malign power of Mafka, the magician witch-doctor of the Kaji; it also touched lightly and rather skeptically upon the reported size and value of the Gonfal, the great diamond of the Kaji, and the enormous emerald of the Zuli that the expedition brought out of the Kaji country with them, only to have them stolen by Spike and Troll, the two white hunters who had accompanied the party. It closed by stating that Gonfala, Wood and Van Eyk had reached the African estate of Lord Greystoke in safety.

It did not mention that Stanley Wood and Gonfala planned to marry immediately and return to England and then to America; nor did it remind us that Lord Greystoke is Tarzan of the Apes.

What Reuter's could not know, it remains for us to tell: the amazing after-

math of the theft of the two great stones, the combined value of which has been estimated at between twenty-five and thirty million dollars—in addition to which is the inexplicable hypnotic powers they confer upon their possessors.

CHAPTER I

CANNIBALS

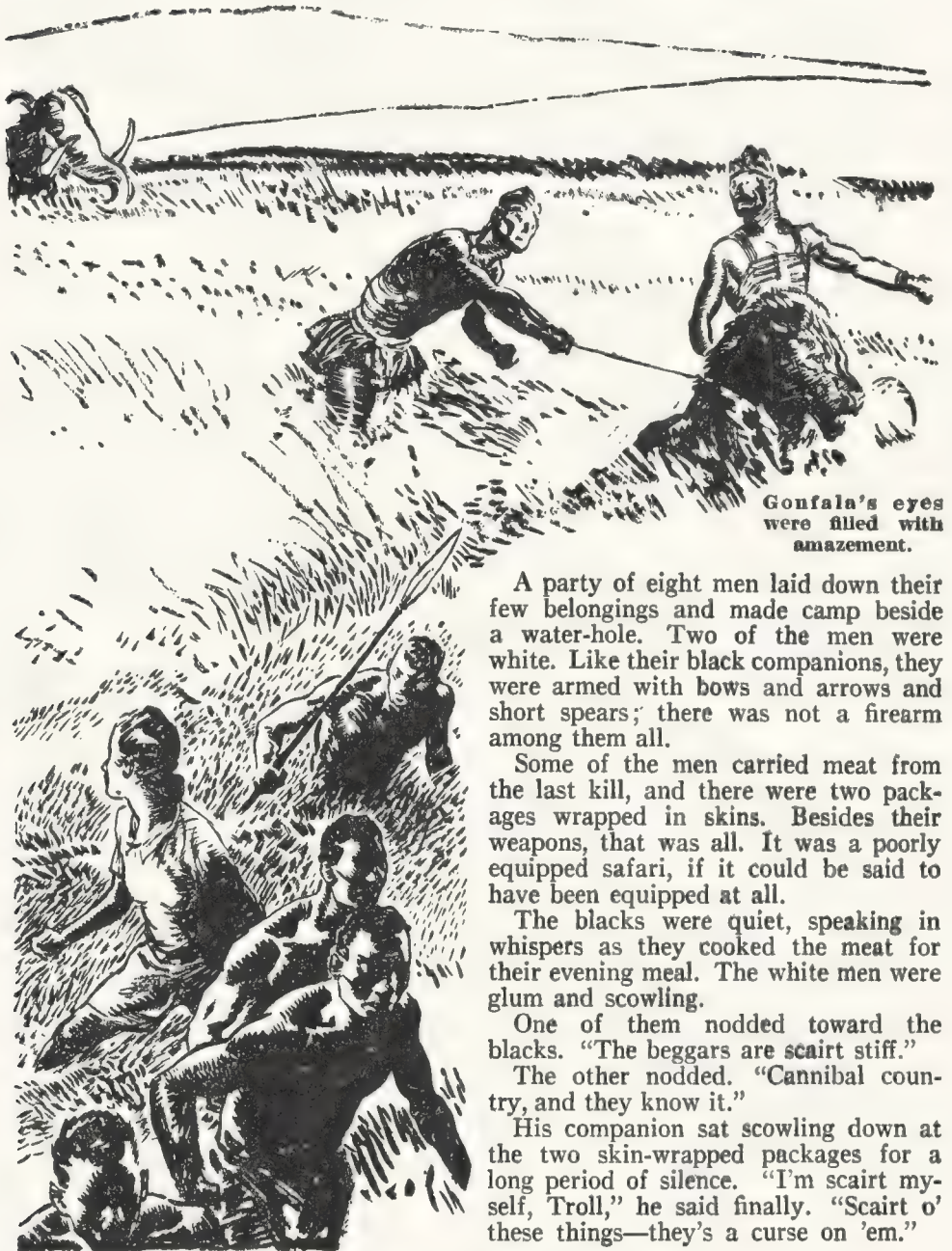
A LOW sun pointed long shadows toward the east; the tired day was preparing to lay aside its burdens. Far away, a lion roared. It was the prelude to another African night, majestic as the king of beasts, and as savage.



Elephant Men

The world's champion fiction hero comes back to you in one of the most interesting of all his adventures.

By EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS



Gonfala's eyes were filled with amazement.

A party of eight men laid down their few belongings and made camp beside a water-hole. Two of the men were white. Like their black companions, they were armed with bows and arrows and short spears; there was not a firearm among them all.

Some of the men carried meat from the last kill, and there were two packages wrapped in skins. Besides their weapons, that was all. It was a poorly equipped safari, if it could be said to have been equipped at all.

The blacks were quiet, speaking in whispers as they cooked the meat for their evening meal. The white men were glum and scowling.

One of them nodded toward the blacks. "The beggars are scairt stiff."

The other nodded. "Cannibal country, and they know it."

His companion sat scowling down at the two skin-wrapped packages for a long period of silence. "I'm scairt myself, Troll," he said finally. "Scairt o' these things—they's a curse on 'em."



"Me like," said the chief. "Me take."

Troll shrugged. "I could take a lot o' cursin' for six million pun."

"Yeh; if we get out alive."

"I aint worrit about that. What I'm worrit about is runnin' into that bloke Clayton. He'll take the rocks away from us."

"He went north."

"But he said he was comin' back, an' he said he'd know if we'd pulled anything crooked. I don't like that bloke."

They lapsed into silence, chewing on the half-cooked meat of a tough old boar the blacks had killed the day before. Again the lion roared.

"The beggar's gettin' closer," remarked Spike. "I hopes he aint no man-eater."

Troll fidgeted. "Shut up!" he growled. "Can't you think of somethin' pleasant for a change?"

"Bein' way out here without no gun'd make any bloke nervous. Look at them damn' things!" He kicked his bow and bundle of arrows that lay at his feet. "I might kill a rabbit with 'em—if I could hit 'im; but I couldn't hit a elephant if he stood still at ten paces—and you know wot kind of a target a lion makes when he charges."

"Oh, fer cripe's sake, shut up!"

Again they lapsed into silence. The shadow of the forest covered them and stretched out across the plain, for the sun had all but set. Suddenly there was a frightened cry: "Bwana! Look!" One of the blacks was pointing toward the forest.

The white men wheeled as they rose to their feet. Coming toward them were a dozen black warriors. Spike stooped to pick up his bow and arrows.

"Lay off!" warned Troll. "They aint enough of us—an' anyways, they may be friendly." Spike stood erect again with empty hands. One by one the blacks of their party rose slowly to their feet.

The strangers were approaching cautiously, with their weapons ready. They halted a dozen paces from the camp, their grim-visaged leader in advance of the others. He surveyed the two white men and their six bearers arrogantly, contemptuously. Troll made the sign of peace.

The leader strode forward, followed by his warriors. "What you do here in the country of the Bantango?" he demanded.

"We look for guides," replied Troll in the same dialect. "Big safari behind us—many guns—they come soon; then we go. We wait here till they come."

"You lie," said the chief. "My man one he follow you two days; then he come me. No big safari. No guns. You lie."

"Wot did I tell you?" demanded Spike. "They's a curse on us—an' look at them filed teeth."

"I told you it was cannibal country," observed Troll lamely.

"Gawdamighty, I'd give both them rocks for a gun!" moaned Spike.

"The rocks!" exclaimed Troll. "That's it! Why didn't we think o' that before?"

"Think o' what?"

"The Gonfal. We can use it like old Mafka did: just put a hand on it an' make any bloke do wotever you wants him to do."

"Blime! That's a idea. Make 'em get out o' here." He stooped and started to unwrap the Gonfal, the great diamond of the Kaji.

The chief took a step forward. "What you got?" he demanded.

"Big medicine," said Troll. "You like see?"

The chief nodded. "Me like, me take."

The swift equatorial night had fallen. And only the cooking-fires of the little camp illuminated the tense scene. From the deep shadows a great lion watched.

Spike undid the thongs that bound the wrappings to the Gonfal, and with trembling hands threw back the skin revealing the great stone shimmering and scintillating in the dancing lights of the cooking-fires. The chief recoiled with a short gasp of astonishment. He did not know what the stone was, but its brilliance awed him.

Troll dropped to one knee beside the Gonfal and laid a hand on it. "Go away!" he said to the chief. "Lay down your weapons, all of you; and go away!"

THE chief and his warriors stood looking at the stone and at Troll. They did not lay down their weapons, nor did they go away. As nothing happened, they regained confidence.

"No lay down weapons; no go away," said the chief. "We stay. Me like; me take." He pointed at the Gonfal. "You come our village. You b'long me."

"You better go away," insisted Troll. He tried to make his voice sound commanding, but failed.

"Wot's wrong with the Gonfal?" demanded Spike.

"It won't work," said Troll.

"Le'me try it." Spike stooped and placed a palm on the stone. "You blokes

drop your weapons an' beat it before our big medicine kills you," he shouted threateningly.

The chief stepped forward and kicked Spike in the face, bowling him over on his back. His warriors rushed in with loud war-cries, brandishing their weapons. And then from the outer darkness came a thunderous roar that shook the earth, and a great lion charged into the savage mêlée.

He leaped over the prostrate Spike and brushed past Troll, falling upon the terrified chief and his warriors.

Troll was quick to grasp the opportunity for escape. He gathered up the great diamond, shouting to Spike and the bearers to follow him and bring the other stone; then he ran for the forest.

A few screams mingled with savage growls rang in their ears for brief moments; then silence.

ALL night they followed close to the forest's edge; nor did they stop until they came upon a small stream shortly after daylight. Then they threw themselves upon the ground, exhausted.

As they chewed once more upon the flesh of the old boar, their spirits revived, and they spoke for the first time for hours.

"I guess we don't know how to work the rock," ventured Troll.

"Who says 'we'?" demanded Spike. "I worked it."

"You?"

"Sure. Didn't I tell 'em they'd get killed if they didn't beat it? And wot happens? The Gonfal calls the old man-eater. You remember that lamp that bloke used to rub—I forget his name; but this works just the same for me. I rubs it and wishes—and there you are!"

"Rats!"

"A'right; didn't I do it?"

"No. That lion was comin' long before you touched the rock. He smelled meat—that was wot brought him, not you and your bloody rock."

"I'll show you. Here, give it to me."

Spike took the diamond from Troll, uncovered it, and placed a palm on its gleaming surface. He glowered fixedly at his companion.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

Troll grinned derisively and advised Spike to, "Go to 'ell." The latter scratched his head in momentary confusion; then he brightened. "'Ere," he exclaimed; "I got a better idea." He scratched a line on the ground with a bit

of stick. "I says now that you can't cross that line—and you can't."

"Who says I can't?" demanded Troll, stepping across the line.

"I guess maybe there's something I don't understand about this," admitted Spike. "That Clayton bloke worked it on the Kaji and the Zuli. You seen him yourself."

"Gonfala was there," reminded Troll. "Maybe that's the answer. Maybe it won't work without her."

"Maybe," admitted Spike; "but the Zuli medicine-man done the same work with the emerald, an' he didn't have no Gonfala."

"Well, try the emerald, then."

"Le'me have it."

"I aint got it."

"One of the boys must have it."

"I told you to bring it."

"One of the boys always carries it," insisted Spike, turning to the bearers sprawled on the ground. "Hey, you! Wich one o' you's got the green rock?" They looked at him blankly; then they looked at one another.

"No got," said one. "No bring."

"Hell!" ejaculated Troll. "You're a rare un, you are, a-leaving maybe a three-million-pun stone back there in the cannibal country!"

CHAPTER II

KIDNAPED

"TIRED?" asked Wood. But Gonfala shook her head. "Not a bit."

"You're doing pretty well for a girl who never had to do anything more strenuous than sit on a throne," laughed Van Eyk.

"You'd be surprised. I can probably outrun and outlast either of you. You see I used to hunt with the Kaji. Mafka insisted on it—lots of exercise. He was a great believer in exercise—for everyone but Mafka."

"I'm glad," said Wood, "for we've got two long marches between this camp and rail-head. I'll be glad when it's over. To tell you the truth, I'm fed up on Africa. I hope I never see it again."

"I don't blame you, Stanlee; you came near staying here a long time."

"Yes; eternity is rather a long time." Wood grimaced. "It's hard to realize, even now, that we escaped."

"Really incredible," agreed Gonfala. "We're the first persons ever to escape from Mafka; and he'd been there—oh,

no one knows how long; the Kaji said always. They believed that he created the world."

The three were camped at the end of a day's march on their way out toward civilization. They had a dependable, well-equipped safari furnished by Tarzan. The men planned on devoting one day to hunting, as they were in excellent game country; then they would cover the two long marches to railhead. The delay for hunting was Wood's concession to Van Eyk, an indefatigable Nimrod, who had obtained permission from the Lord of the Jungle to take out a few trophies for his collection.

AS night fell, the light of their beast-fire cast dancing shadows through the camp and shone far into the night, both attracting and repelling the great carnivores upon whose domain they trespassed; for this was lion country. It attracted also other eyes a mile or more to the north.

"I wonder what that might be," said Spike.

"A fire," growled Troll. "What you think it was—a iceberg?"

"Funny, aint you?"

"Not as funny as a bloke what runs off an' leaves three million puns' worth o' emerald with a bunch of cannibals."

"Fer cripe's sake, quit chewin' about that! I didn't leave it any more 'n you did. What I mean is, there must be men over by that fire; I wonder who."

"Natives, perhaps."

"Or white hunters."

"What difference does it make?" asked Troll.

"They might put us on the right trail."

"An' tell that Clayton bloke where we are? You're balmy."

"How do you know he's around here? Maybe they never even heard of him."

"He's everywhere. Everybody's heard of him. He said he'd know it if we double-crossed Stanley. After I seen what he done in the Kaji country, I wouldn't put nothin' past him—he's omnivorous."

"Whatever that means."

"You're ignorant."

"Well, just the same, I think we'd oughter find out who made that fire. If they're one thing, we'd better light out of here; if they're the other, we can ask 'em to set us on the right trail."

"Maybe you said something intelligent at last. It wouldn't do no harm to go have a look-see."

"That fire may be a long ways off, and—"

"And what?"

"This is lion country."

"You scared?"

"Sure I'm scared. So are you, unless you're a bigger fool than I think. Nobody but a fool wouldn't be scared in lion country at night without a gun."

"We'll take a couple of the smokes with us. They say lions like dark meat."

"All right; let's get goin'."

Guided by the fire, the four men approached the Wood-Van-Eyk camp; and after reconnoitering made their way to the concealment of a clump of bushes where they could see and not be seen.

"Cripes!" whispered Spike. "Look who's there!"

"Gonfala!" breathed Troll.

"An' Wood an' Van Eyk."

"T'ell with them! If we only had the girl!"

"Wot do we want of her?"

"You get less brains every minute. Wot do we want of 'er? If we had her, we could make the diamond do its stuff just like Mafka did—just like Clayton did. We'd be safe; nothin' nor nobody couldn't hurt us."

"Well, we aint got her."

"Shut up! Listen to wot they're sayin'."

The voices of the three whites by the campfire came clearly to Troll and Spike. Van Eyk was making plans for the morrow's hunt.

"I REALLY think Gonfala ought to stay in camp and rest; but since she insists on coming along, you and she can go together. If there were three men, now, we could spread out farther and cover more ground."

"I can do whatever a man can do," insisted Gonfala. "You can assume that you have three men."

"But, Gonfala—"

"Don't be foolish, Stanlee. I am not as the women you have known in your civilized countries. From what you have told me, I shall be as helpless and afraid there as they would be here; but here I am not afraid. So I hunt tomorrow as the third man, and now I am going to bed. Good night, Stanlee. Good night, Bob."

"Well, I guess that settles it," remarked Wood with a wry smile; "but when I get you back in God's country, you'll have to mind me!"

"Perhaps," said Gonfala.

The chill of night still hung like a vapor below the new sun as the three hunters set out from their camp for the day's sport, and although the hunt had been Van Eyk's idea primarily, each of the others was keen to bag a lion. Over their breakfast coffee they had laid wagers as to which would be the lucky one to bring down the first trophy, with the result that not a little friendly rivalry had been engendered. That each might come in with a prize seemed entirely possible, for the night had been filled with the continual roaring of the great carnivores.

SHORTLY after leaving camp the three separated, Van Eyk keeping straight ahead toward the east, Wood diverging toward the south, and Gonfala to the north; each was accompanied by a gunbearer; and some of the members of the safari followed along after Van Eyk and Wood, either believing that one of the men would be more likely to get a lion than would the girl, or perhaps feeling safer behind the guns of the men.

From behind an outcropping of rock at the summit of a low hill northwest of the Wood-Van-Eyk camp, Spike and Troll watched their departure; while below them, concealed from sight, the six men of their safari waited. The two whites watched Gonfala and her gunbearer approaching across the open plain. The direction that she was taking suggested that she would pass a little to the east of them, but that she would then still be in sight of Van Eyk and possibly Wood also.

The latter was not at all happy about the arrangements for the day; he did not like the idea of Gonfala going out on her own after lion with only a gunbearer, but the girl had overridden his every objection. He had insisted, however, upon sending as gunbearer a man of known courage who was also a good shot; and Wood instructed him to be ready always with the second rifle in the event that Gonfala got into a tight place and, regardless of custom, to shoot a charging lion himself.

While Gonfala had had little previous experience of firearms prior to the last few weeks, it gave Wood some consolation to reflect that she had, even in that short time, developed into an excellent shot; and in so far as her nerve was concerned, he had no cause for anxiety. What he could not have known, of course, was the far greater menace of the two men

who watched her from their rocky concealment upon the hilltop. . . .

Gonfala passed the hill beneath the eyes of Spike and Troll and then crossed a low rise that was a continuation of the hill running down into the plain, and from then on she was hidden from the sight of either Van Eyk or Wood. The country she now entered was broken by gullies and outcroppings of rock, by low bushes and occasional trees; so it was comparatively easy for Spike and Troll to follow her without danger of being discovered; and this they did, catching only an occasional glimpse of her during the ensuing hour.

UNSUSPECTING the fact that eight men followed upon her trail, Gonfala continued her seemingly fruitless search for lion, bearing constantly a little to the west because of a range of low hills that lay to the right of her and thus constantly increasing the distance between herself and her two companions. She had about come to the conclusion that the lions had all left the country, when she heard, faint and far toward the east, the report of two rifle-shots.

"Some one else had the luck," she said to her gunbearer; "I guess we came in the wrong direction."

From the darkness came a thunderous roar, and a great lion charged into the mêlée.

"No, *Memsahib*," he whispered, pointing. "Look! *Simba!*"

She looked quickly in the direction he indicated; and there among the grasses beneath a tree she saw the head of a lion, the yellow-green eyes gazing unblinkingly at her. The beast was about a hundred yards distant; he was lying down, and as only his head was visible, he offered a poor target. A frontal shot, she knew, would only tend to infuriate him and precipitate a charge.

"Pay no attention to him," she whispered. "We'll try to get closer and to one side."

She moved forward then, not directly toward the lion, but as though to pass a little to the right of him; and always his eyes followed them, but neither she nor the gunbearer gave any indication that they were aware of his presence. When she had approached to within about fifty yards, she stopped and faced him; but he



only lay quietly regarding her. When she took a few steps straight toward him, however, he bared his great fangs and growled.

Topping a rise behind her, Spike took in the situation at a glance. He motioned to his men to halt, and beckoned Troll to his side. Together they watched the tense scene below them.

"I wish he'd get up," said Gonfala.

The gunbearer picked up a stone and hurled it at the lion. The result was immediate. With an angry roar the lion leaped to its feet and charged.

"Shoot, Memsahib!"

Gonfala dropped to one knee and fired. The lion leaped high into the air, its angry roar shattering the silence. It was hit, but it was not stopped; for although it rolled over on its back, it was up again in an instant and bearing down on them at terrific speed. Gonfala fired again—and missed. Then the gunbearer took aim and pressed the trigger of his gun. There was only a futile click. The cartridge missed fire.

The lion was almost upon Gonfala when the gunbearer, unnerved by the failure of his gun, turned and fled. Unwittingly he saved Gonfala's life, for at sight of the man in flight, the lion, already rising over Gonfala, followed a natural instinct that has saved the life of many a hunter, and pursued the fleeing man. Gonfala fired again, and again scored a hit; but it did not stop the infuriated beast as it rose upon its hind feet and seized the gunbearer, the great fangs closing upon his head until they met in the center of his brain.

The girl was aghast as she stood helplessly by while the huge cat mauled its victim for a moment; then it sagged upon the body of the man and died.

"THAT," said Troll, "is wot I calls a bit o' luck. We not only gets the girl, but we gets two guns."

"And no witness," added Spike. "Come on!" He motioned the others to follow him, and started down the declivity toward Gonfala.

She saw them almost immediately and for a moment thought her companions were coming, but presently she recognized them. She knew that they were bad men who had stolen the great diamond and the emerald, but she had no reason to believe that she was in any danger from them.

They came up to her, smiling and friendly. "You sure had a narrow squeak," said Spike. "We seen it from the top of that rise, but we couldn't have done nothing to help you even if we'd had guns—we was too far away."

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"We was tryin' to find our way to rail-head," explained Spike. "We been lost fer weeks."

Troll was recovering the gun and ammunition from the dead gunbearer, and Spike was eyeing Gonfala's splendid rifle.

"We're on our way to rail-head," she explained. "You can come back to camp with me and go on to rail-head with us."



"Won't that be nice!" exclaimed Spike. "Say, that's a fine gun you got there. Le'me see it a minute." Thoughtlessly she handed the weapon over to him; then she stepped over to the body of the dead gunbearer.

"He's quite dead," she said. "It's too bad. Your men can carry him back to camp."

"We aint goin' back to your camp," said Spike.

"Oh," she exclaimed. "Well, what am I to do? I can't take him back alone."

"You aint goin' back, neither."

"What do you mean?"

"Just wot I says: You aint goin' back to your camp. You're comin' with us."

"Oh, no, I'm not."

"Listen, Gonfala," said Spike. "We don't want no trouble with you. We don't want to hurt you none; so you might as well come along peaceful-like. We need you."

"What for?" Her voice was brave, but her heart sank within her.

"We got the Gonfal, but we can't make it work without you."

"Work?"

"Yes, work. We're goin' to set ourselves up like Mafka did and be kings—just as soon as we find a piece o' country we like. We'll live like kings too, off the fat of the land. You can be queen—have everything you want. Maybe, even, I'll marry you." He grinned.

"The hell you will," snapped Troll. "She belongs to me as much as to you."

Gonfala winced. "I belong to neither of you. You are both fools. If you take me away, you will be followed and killed; or at the least, both I and the Gonfal will be taken from you. If you have any sense, you will let me go; then you can take the Gonfal to Europe. They tell me that the money it would bring there would buy you anything you wanted all the rest of your lives."

"A fat chance we'd have gettin' rid o' that rock in Europe," said Troll. "No, sister, we got it all figgered out. You're comin' with us, an' that's that."

CHAPTER III

CLEWS

VAN EYK dropped his lion with the second shot, and a few minutes later he heard the three shots fired by Gonfala. Wood, having had no luck, and attracted by the report of Van Eyk's gun, joined him. He was still apprehensive concern-

ing Gonfala's safety; and now that Van Eyk had his trophy, he suggested that they send the carcass back to camp while they joined Gonfala. Van Eyk agreed, and they set out in the direction from which they had heard the shots.

They searched for two hours without result, often calling her name and occasionally discharging their rifles; then, more by chance than design, they stumbled upon the little swale where Gonfala had come upon her lion. There it lay upon the body of the dead gunbearer, but Gonfala was nowhere to be seen.

The ground was hard and stony, giving no indication to the untrained eyes of the white men that others beside Gonfala and her gunbearer had been there; so they assumed that, having no one to cut off or carry the head of the lion back to camp, the girl had returned there herself alone; and that, having come from another direction, they had missed her. They were therefore not unduly apprehensive until after they reached camp and discovered that she had not returned.

By that time it was late in the afternoon; but Wood insisted upon taking up the search at once, and Van Eyk seconded the suggestion. They divided the safari into three sections. Van Eyk and wood, each heading one, set out on slightly diverging trails in the general direction that Gonfala had taken in the morning; while the third, under a headman, was ordered to remain in camp, keeping the large fire burning and occasionally discharging a rifle to guide Gonfala if she should return toward camp without meeting either Wood or Van Eyk. And all during the night Gonfala and her captors heard the faint reports of rifles far to the south.

IT was around noon of the following day that, exhausted and disheartened, Wood and Van Eyk returned to camp.

"I'm afraid it's no use, old man," said the latter. "If she'd been alive, she'd have heard our rifles and replied."

"I can't believe she's dead," said Wood; "I won't believe it!"

Van Eyk shook his head. "I know it's tough, but you've got to face facts and reason. She couldn't be alive in this lion country now."

"But she had two guns," insisted Wood. "You saw that she took the gun and ammunition from the gunbearer after he was killed. If she'd been attacked by a lion, she'd have fired at least once; and we never heard a shot."

"She might have been taken unaware—stalked after dark and struck down before she knew a lion was near. You've seen 'em charge; you know it's all over in a second if you aren't ready for 'em."

Wood nodded. "Yes, I know. I suppose you're right, but I won't give up—not yet."

"Well, Stan, I've got to get back home. If I thought there was the slightest chance, I'd stay; but I know there's not. You'd better come along and try to forget it as soon as you can. You might never, here; but back home it'll be different."

"There's no use, Van; you go along. I'm going to stay."

"But what can you do alone?"

"I won't try to do anything alone. I'm going back and find Tarzan; he'll help me. If anyone can find her or where she was killed, it's he."

TEN days later Wood plodded wearily into the camp that he had not left except in his daily fruitless searches for Gonfala. He had not gone back to enlist Tarzan's aid, but had instead sent a long letter to the ape-man by a runner. Every day for ten days he had combed the country for miles around, and each day he had become more convinced that Gonfala was not dead. He had found no trace of a human kill by lions, no shred of clothing, no sign of the two guns or the ammunition that Gonfala had had with her—though he had found plenty of lion kills: zebra, antelope, wildebeest. But he had found something else that gave support to his belief that Gonfala might be alive—the camp of Spike and Troll. It lay only a short distance northerly from his own camp. Gonfala must have passed close to it the morning she started out to hunt. What type of men had camped there, he could not know; but he assumed that they were natives; for there were no signs of white men—no empty tins, no indications that a tent had been pitched.

Perhaps, then, Gonfala's fate had been worse than the merciful death the king of beasts would have accorded her. That thought goaded him to desperation, and filled his mind with red imaginings of vengeance. Such were his thoughts as he threw himself upon his cot in hopeless bafflement to reproach himself as he had a thousand thousand times for having permitted Gonfala to hunt alone that day. How long ago it seemed, how many ages of bitter suffering!

A figure darkened the doorway of the tent, and Wood turned to look. Then he sprang to his feet. "Tarzan! God, I thought you'd never come."

"I came as soon as I got your letter. You have been searching, of course; what have you found?"

WOOD told him of his failure to find any evidence that Gonfala had fallen prey to lions, but that he had found a camp in which there had been men recently.

"That is interesting," commented Tarzan. "It is too late now to investigate that today; tomorrow I'll have a look at it."

Early next morning Wood and the ape-man were at the camp from which Spike and Troll had been attracted by the campfire that had led them to the discovery of the presence of Gonfala. As Tarzan examined the ground and the surroundings minutely, his lifetime of experience, his trained powers of observation, his sensitive nostrils revealed facts that were a sealed book to the American. The charred wood in the dead fires, the crushed grasses, the refuse each told him something.

"It was a poor camp," he said finally. "Perhaps ten or a dozen men camped here. They had very little food, and their packs were few. They did have packs, and that indicates that there were white men—perhaps one, perhaps two; the rest were natives. Their food was poor. That would suggest that they had no firearms, for this is a good game country; so perhaps there were no white men at all. Yet I am sure there were. They had only the meat of an old boar to eat. Some of the bones were split and the marrow extracted. That suggests natives. Other bones were not split, and that suggests white men."

"How do you know they had packs?" asked Wood, who could see no evidence to suggest anything more than that some one had been there and built fires and eaten food. He could see the discarded bones of their repast.

"If you look carefully, you will see where they lay on the ground. It has been ten days at least; and the signs are faint, but they are there. The grasses are pressed down and the marks of the cords that bound the packs are still visible."

"I see nothing," admitted Wood after close scrutiny.

Tarzan smiled one of his rare smiles. "Now we shall see which way they



"We aint goin' back to your camp," said Spike. "You aint goin' back, neither."

went," he said. "The spoor of so many men should be plain."

They followed toward the north the freshest spoor that led from the camp, only to lose it where a great herd of grazing game had obliterated it; then Tarzan picked it up again beyond. Eventually it led to the spot where the bodies of the gunbearer and the lion had lain.

"Your theory seems to have been correct," said the ape-man. "Gonfala, apparently, was captured by this party."

"That was eleven days ago," mused Wood despairingly. "There is no telling where they are now, or what they have done to her. We must lose no time in following."

"Not we," replied Tarzan. "You will return to your camp and start tomorrow for my place. When I have definitely located Gonfala, if I cannot rescue her without help,"—again he smiled,—"I'll send word by a runner, and you can come with an escort of Waziri."

"But can't I go along with you?"

"I can travel much faster alone. You will do as I say. That is all."

And that *was* all. Wood stood watching the magnificent figure of the ape-man until it disappeared beyond a rise in the rolling plain; then he turned dejectedly toward camp. He knew Tarzan was right, that a man whose senses were dulled by generations of non-use would prove only a drag on the alert ape-man.

FOR two days Tarzan followed the trail in a northerly direction; then an unseasonable rain obliterated it forever. He was now in the country of the Bantagos, a warlike tribe of cannibals and hereditary enemies of his Waziri. He knew that if the captors of Gonfala had come this way, it might be because they were themselves Bantagos, and so he determined to investigate thoroughly before searching farther. If they had not been Bantagos, it was very possible that they had been captured by this tribe; for he knew that they were a small and poorly equipped company.

In any event it seemed best to have a look into the village of the chief—to which, unquestionably, important captives would have been taken; but where the village lay, the ape-man did not know. To the east of him a range of low hills stretched away into the north, and to these he made his way. As he ascended them, he commenced to glimpse villages to the west and north, and finally from the summit of one of the higher hills he obtained a view of a considerable extent of country containing many villages. The majority of these were mean and small—just a handful of huts surrounded by flimsy palisades of poles.

The valley in which the villages lay was dotted with trees, and on the west abutted upon a forest. It was a scene of peace and loveliness that lent a certain picturesqueness to even the squalid kraals of the Bantagos and belied the savagery and bestiality of the inhabitants. The beauty of the aspect was not lost upon the ape-man, whose appreciation of the loveliness or grandeur of nature, undulled by familiarity, was one of the chiefest sources of his joy of living. In contemplating the death that he knew must come to him, as to all living things, his keenest regret lay in the fact that he would never again be able to look upon the hills and valleys and forests of his beloved Africa; and so today, as he lay like a great lion low upon the summit of a hill, stalking his prey, he was still sensible of the natural beauties that lay spread before him. Toward the center of



the valley lay a large village; this, Tarzan knew, must be that of the chief.

The moonless night descended, a black shroud that enveloped the forest, the trees and the villages, concealing them from the eyes of the watcher; then the Lord of the Jungle arose, stretching himself. So like a lion's were all his movements that one might have expected the roar of the hunting beast to rumble from his great chest. . . . Silently he moved down toward the village of the chief. Little lights shone now about the valley, marking the various villages by their cooking fires. Toward the fires of the largest strode an English lord, naked but for a G-string.

From the hills he was quitting, a lion roared. He too was coming down to the villages where the natives had gathered

their little flocks within the flimsy inclosures of their kraals. The ape-man stopped and raised his face toward the heavens. From his deep chest rose the ferocious, answering challenge of the bull-ape. The savages in the villages fell silent, looking questioningly at one another, wide-eyed in terror. The warriors seized their weapons, the women huddled their children closer.

"A demon," whispered one.

"Once before I heard that cry," said the chief of the Bantagos. "It is the cry of the devil-god of the Waziri."

"Why would he come here?" demanded a warrior. "The rains have come many times since we raided in the country of the Waziri."

"If it is not he," said the chief, "then it is another devil-god."

"When I was a boy," said an old man, "I went once with a raiding-party far toward the place where the sun sleeps, to a great forest where the hairy tree-men live. They make a loud cry like that, a cry that stops the heart and turns the skin cold. Perhaps it is one of the hairy tree-men. We were gone a long time. The rains were just over when we left our village; they came again before we returned. I was a great warrior. I killed many warriors on that raid. I ate their hearts; that is what makes me so brave." No one paid any attention to him, but he rambled on. The others were listening for some sound that might presage the approach of an enemy.

Tarzan approached the palisade that surrounded the village of the chief. A tree within the enclosure spread its branches across the top. The ape-man came close and investigated. Through the interstices between the poles that formed the palisade he watched the natives. Gradually their tense nerves relaxed as there was no repetition of the cry that had alarmed them; and they returned to their normal pursuits.

Tarzan wished to scale the palisade and gain the branches of the tree that spread above him; but he wished to do it without attracting the attention of the Bantagos, and because of the frail construction of the palisade, he knew that that would be impossible during the quiet that prevailed within the village at the supper hour. He must wait. Perhaps the opportunity he sought would present itself later. With the patience of the wild beast that stalks its prey, the ape-man waited. He could, if necessary, wait an hour, a day, a week. Time meant as little to him as it had to the apes that raised him, his contacts with civilization not having as yet enslaved him to the fetish of time.

Nothing that he could see within the restricted limits of his vision, a section of the village visible between two huts just within the palisades, indicated that the Bantagos held white prisoners; but he knew that if such were the case they might be confined within a hut; and it was this, among other things, that he must know before continuing his search.

THE evening meal concluded, the blacks lapsed into somnolence. The quiet of the African night was broken only by the occasional roars of the hunting lion, coming closer and closer, a sound so familiar that it aroused the in-

terest of neither the blacks within the village or the watcher without.

An hour passed. The lion ceased his roaring—evidence that he was now approaching his prey and stalking. The blacks stirred with awakening interest with the passing of the phenomenon of digestion, and became motivated by the same primitive urge that fills night-clubs and other late spots with dancers after the theater. A dusky maestro gathered his players with their primitive instruments, and the dancing began. It was the moment for which Tarzan had been awaiting. Amidst the din of the drums and the shouts of the dancers, he climbed to the top of the palisade and swung into the tree above.

FROM a convenient limb he surveyed the scene below. He could see the chief's hut now, and the chief himself. The old fellow sat upon a stool watching the dancers, but in neither the chief nor the dancers did the ape-man discover a focus for his interest—that was riveted upon something that lay at the chief's feet: the Great Emerald of the Zuli.

There could be no mistake. There could be but one such stone, and its presence here induced a train of deductive reasoning in the alert mind of the ape-man that led to definite conclusions—that Spike and Troll had been in the vicinity, and that it was logical to assume that it must have been they who abducted Gonfala. Were they here now, in this village of the Bantagos? Tarzan doubted it—there was nothing to indicate that there were any prisoners in the village; but he must know definitely; and so he waited on with the infinite patience that was one of the heritages of his upbringing.

The night wore on; at last the dancers tired, and the village street was deserted. Sounds of slumber arose from the dark huts, while here and there a child fretted or an infant wailed.

The ape-man dropped silently into the empty street. Like a shadow he passed from hut to hut, his keen nostrils searching out the scents that would tell him, as surely as might his eyes could he have seen within, whether a white lay prisoner there. No one heard him; not even a sleeping cur was disturbed. When he had made the rounds, he knew that those he sought were not there, but he must know more. He returned to the chief's hut. On the ground before it, like worthless trash, lay the Great Emerald of the Zuli.

Its weird green light cast a soft radiance over the bronzed body of the jungle lord, tinged the chief's hut palely green, accentuated the blackness of the low entrance way.

The ape-man paused a moment, listening; then he stooped and entered the hut. He listened to the breathing of the inmates. By their breathing he located the women and the children and the one man—that one would be the chief. To his side he stepped and kneeled, stooping low. Steel-thewed fingers closed lightly upon the throat of the sleeper.

"Make no sound," whispered the ape-man, "if you would live."

"Who are you?" demanded the chief in a whisper. "What do you want?"

"I am the devil-god," replied Tarzan. "Where are the two white men and the white woman?"

"I have seen no white woman," replied the chief.

"Do not speak lies—I have seen the green stone."

"The two white men left it behind them when they ran away," insisted the chief, "but there was no white woman with them. The sun has risen from his bed as many times as I have fingers on my two hands and toes on one foot since the white men were here."

"Why did they run away?" demanded the ape-man.

"We were at their camp. A lion came and attacked us; the white men ran away, leaving the green stone behind."

A woman awoke and sat up. "Who speaks?" she demanded.

"Tell her to be quiet," cautioned Tarzan.

"Shut up," snapped the chief at the woman, "if you do not wish to die—it is the devil-god!"

The woman stifled a scream and lay down, burying her face in the dirty reeds that formed her bed.

"Which way did the white men go?"

"They came from the north. When they ran away, they went into the forest to the west. We did not follow them. The lion had killed two of my warriors and mauled others."

"Were there many in the safari of the white men?"

"Only six, beside themselves. It was a poor safari. They had little food and no guns. They were very poor." His tone was contemptuous. "I have told you all I know. I did not harm the white men or their men. Now go away. I know no more."

"You stole the green stone from them," accused Tarzan.

"No. They were frightened and ran away, forgetting it; but they took the white stone with them."

"The white stone?"

"Yes, the white stone. One of them held it in his hands and told us to put down our weapons and go away. He said it was big medicine and that it would kill us if we did not go away; but we stayed, and it did not kill us."

In the darkness the ape-man smiled. "Has a white woman passed through your country lately? If you lie to me, I shall come back and kill you."

"I have never seen a white woman," replied the chief. "If one had passed through my country, I should know it."

Tarzan slipped from the hut as silently as he had come. As he went, he gathered up the Great Emerald and swung into the tree that overhung the palisade. The chief breathed a choking sigh of relief and broke into a cold sweat.

Strong in the nostrils of the ape-man was the scent of Numa the lion. He knew that the great cat was stalking close to the palisade. He had no quarrel with Numa this night, and no wish to tempt a hungry hunting lion; so he made himself comfortable in the tree above the cannibal village to wait until Numa had taken himself elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV.

TANTOR

WEARY day after weary day Gonfala had trudged north with Spike and Troll. They had made a wide detour to avoid the country of the Bantagos, for although they had both the Gonfal and Gonfala, they lacked the courage of their convictions relative to this combination that previously had seemed all-powerful.

Gonfala's safety, so far, had lain in the two men's jealousy of one another. Neither would leave her alone with the other. Because of her, they had ceased to speak except when absolutely necessary; and each was constantly afraid that the other would murder him. To assure her own safety, the girl watched over the safety of each of the others as though she loved them both.

One of the blacks carried the great diamond; nor did either of the white men attempt to touch it without arousing the savage objections of the other; for now that Gonfala was with them, each

feared that the other might use the magical power of the stone to destroy him.

Spike was in search of a district which he had passed through on safari several years before.

"It's a regular garden, miss," he explained to Gonfala; "and game! S'elp me, it's lousy with game; and that gentle, from not bein' hunted none, that you can walk right up to 'em an' bat 'em over the head, if you'd a mind to. We could live like kings and with plenty of servants too; for the natives is peaceable-like, and not many of 'em. I mean not too many. We could rule 'em easy, what with our havin' the Gonfal and you."

"I don't know that the Gonfal would do you much good," said the girl.

"Why not?" demanded Troll.

"You don't know how to use it. One must have certain mental powers to succeed with the Gonfal."

"Have you got 'em?" asked Spike.

"I could use it unless Mafka desired to prevent me. He could do that, for his mind could control mine. I've never tried to use these powers since Mafka died."

BUT you think you can?" Spike's voice reflected the fear that was in him. He had banked heavily on the power of the Gonfal.

"I think so," replied Gonfala, "but I shall not use it to help either of you unless I am absolutely assured that neither one of you will harm me."

"I wouldn't think of hurtin' you, miss," Spike assured her.

"Me neither; but you better not trust him," said Troll.

Spike took a step toward Troll, his fists clenched. "You dirty crook," he shouted, "you're the one needs watchin', but you won't need it much longer. I'll break your neck for you, right now!"

Troll jumped back and picked up his rifle. "Come any closer, and I'll let you have it," he threatened, holding the muzzle of the weapon aimed at Spike's belly.

"You'd better not," Spike admonished him. "You may need another gun in some of the country we got to go through. You'd never get through alone with just six niggers."

"That goes for you too," growled Troll.

"Then let's call it quits, and quit our rowin'—it aint gettin' us nothin'."

"It won't ever get me, for either one of you," said Gonfala. "And that's what's been the trouble between you. You stole me from my friends, and some day they're going to catch up with you."

When they do, it'll be better for you if you haven't harmed me. Stanlee Wood will never give up until he finds me; and when he tells Tarzan I have been stolen, you can rest assured I'll be found and you will be punished."

"Tarzan!" exclaimed Spike. "What's Tarzan got to do with it?"

"You know who he is?"

"Sure—everybody's heard of him; but I aint never seen him. I always thought maybe he was just somethin' somebody made up. What do you know about him? Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes, and so have you."

"Not us," said Troll.

"You remember Clayton?" asked the girl.

"Sure, I remember Clayton. That bloke was as good as two— Say! You don't mean—?"

"Yes, I do. Clayton is Tarzan."

Troll looked worried. Spike scowled, then he shrugged. "Wot if he is?" he demanded. "He couldn't never find us—not where we're goin'; and even if he did, wot could he do against the Gonfal? We could do what we pleased with him."

"Sure," agreed Troll; "we could snuff him out like that." He snapped his fingers.

"Oh, no, you couldn't," said Gonfala.

"An' w'y couldn't we?"

"Because I wouldn't let you. You can't use the Gonfal without my help, and when Tarzan and Stanlee come I shall help them. You see, with the Gonfal, I can snuff you out."

THE two men looked at one another. Presently Spike walked away, calling to Troll to accompany him. When he was out of earshot of Gonfala, he stopped. "Listen," he said; "that dame's got us to rights. If she ever gets her paws on that rock, our lives won't be worth nothin'."

"Looks like the Gonfal aint goin' to do us much good," said Troll. "We can't make it work without her; and if we let her get her hands on it, she'll kill us. Wot are we goin' to do?"

"In the first place, we got to see that she doesn't get to touch it. One of us has got to carry it—she might get the nigger to let her touch it sometime when we weren't around. You can carry it if you want to."

"That's wot I been sayin' for a long time," Troll reminded him.

"Well, it's different now," Spike explained. "Neither one of us can get it to

work, an' neither one of us dares let her touch it; so we're safe as long as one of us has it."

"But wot good is the stone goin' to do us, then?"

"Wait till we get up in that country I been tellin' you about. We can make the dame be good then. All we got to do is to tell her to work the stone the way we say, or we'll croak her. She'll have to do it, too; for where I'm takin' her, she couldn't never find her way out after she'd killed us; so it wouldn't do her no good."

Troll shook his head. "Maybe she'd kill us anyway, just to get even with us."

"Well, there aint nothin' we can do about it now, anyway," said Spike; "so let's get goin'. Come on, you niggers! Come on, Gonfala; we're trekkin'—the sun's been up an hour."

AS they broke camp far to the north of him, Tarzan stopped at the edge of the forest that bordered the valley of the Bantangos on the west. He looked about him, carefully taking his bearings; then with the tip of his spear he loosened the earth in the center of a triangle formed by three trees, and with his hands scooped out the earth until he had a hole about a foot deep. Into this he dropped the Great Emerald of the Zuli. When he had refilled the hole and covered it with the fallen leaves and twigs that he had carefully scraped away, no human eye could have detected the hiding-place. With his knife he blazed a tree fifteen paces from one of the three trees that formed the triangle. Only Tarzan could ever find the place again. Should he never returned, the huge jewel would lie there to the end of time, undiscovered.

Unable to find the trail that the storm had obliterated, the ape-man attempted to deduce from his knowledge of the two men he was now positive were the abductors of Gonfala and from his knowledge of events leading up to the present moment, the logical destination for which they were headed.

He knew that they were familiar with the miraculous powers of the Gonfal and that they had been unable to call these powers into being themselves. The chief of the Bantangos had told him of their failure to demonstrate the value of their big medicine. Either by accident or intent they had found Gonfala, and what more natural than that they would assume that with her aid they could command the wonders of the Gonfal? And



Were there prisoners in the village? Tarzan must know definitely; so he waited on, with infinite patience.

where would be the best place to utilize these powers? Why, the country of the Kaji, naturally; for there they would be safer from detection than almost anywhere else on earth, and there they would find a tribe accustomed to the domination of the stone. There they would find women; and Tarzan felt that if he were any judge of men, that circumstance would have considerable bearing with Troll and Spike. So Tarzan traveled toward the north on a trail parallel to that taken by Spike and Troll, but some distance to the west of it.

For two days Tarzan moved toward the north, and still there was no sign of those whom he sought. He made his kills and ate and slept, and swung on tirelessly through forest or across plains.

As he was passing through a strip of forest along the shoulder of a range of hills thick with bamboo, he heard a sound that brought him to halt, listening. It was repeated—the weak trumpeting of an elephant in distress. The ape-man turned aside from the direction he had been traveling and moved cautiously through the bamboo thicket. He was moving down-wind; so he made a wide

circuit in order to pick up the scent-spoor of what lay ahead. There might be something beside an elephant: the caution of the beast aided and abetted the reasoning powers of the man.

Presently the scent of Tantor the elephant told him that he had circled his quarry, and even stronger was the rank odor of Dango the hyena; then, harsh and raucous, came the hideous laughing cry of the unclean beast, followed by the plaintive help-cry of the elephant. Tantor was in trouble, and the ape-man pushed forward to learn the cause.

Almost as old as Tarzan was the friendship of Tarzan and Tantor. Perhaps he had never seen this elephant before; but still, to Tarzan, he would be Tantor—the name and the friendship belonged to all elephants.

As Tarzan came closer, he moved more cautiously—beastlike, always scenting a trap. For those of the jungle, eternal vigilance is the price of life. At last he came close enough so that by parting the bamboo he could see that for which he had been searching. The top of Tantor's back was just visible in an elephant-pit. Snapping and growling at the edge of the pit were a pair of hyenas; circling above was Ska the vulture; from these omens the ape-man knew Tantor was near death.

Parting the bamboo, Tarzan stepped into the little clearing that the builders of the pit had made, an enlargement of a wide elephant-trail. Instantly the hyenas transferred their attention from the elephant to the ape-man, and with bared fangs faced him. But as the man advanced, they retreated, snarling.

AS he approached the pit, Tantor saw him and trumpeted a feeble warning. The elephant's skin hung loosely on its great frame, evidencing that it had been long without food or water. It had fallen into a pit that must have been dug and then abandoned, either because the tribe that dug it had moved away, or because no elephant having fallen into it, they had ceased to visit it.

Tarzan spoke to Tantor in the strange language that he used with the beasts of the jungle. Perhaps Tantor did not understand the words—who may know? But something, the tone perhaps, carried the idea which the ape-man wished to convey, that he was a friend; but Tantor needed something beside kind words, and so Tarzan set about cutting the bamboo that bore the tenderest shoots and carrying them to the imprisoned beast.

Tantor ate with avidity, the water content of the shoots furnishing at least some of the moisture that his great frame required even more than it required food; then Tarzan set to work with spear and knife and hands upon the seemingly herculean task of excavating a ramp up which Tantor could walk to liberty. It was the work not of an hour but of many hours, and it was not completed until the following day; then, weak and staggering, the great pachyderm climbed slowly from the pit. He was a huge beast, one of the largest old bulls Tarzan had ever seen. One tusk, by some peculiar freak of nature, was much darker than the other; and this, with his great size, must have marked him among his fellows as a bull of distinction.

As he came out of the pit, his sensitive trunk passed over the body of the ape-man in what was almost a caress; then, as Tarzan took his way once more toward the north, Tantor turned and moved slowly along the elephant-trail eastward, toward the nearest water.

DAYS passed. Stanley Wood, waiting at Tarzan's estate, became almost frantic as no news came of Tarzan's whereabouts. He pleaded with Muviro, headman of the Waziri, to furnish him with an escort and let him set out in search of Gonfala; and at last Muviro yielded to his importunities and gave him half a dozen warriors as an escort.

Wood took up the search at the point at which Tarzan had left him, where the clean-picked bones of the lion Gonfala had killed lay bleaching in the sun. He knew only that those he sought had started north at that spot. It was a blind and seemingly hopeless search; but it meant action; and anything was preferable to sitting idly.

As they approached the Bantango country, the Waziri, knowing the nature and temper of the inhabitants, counseled making a detour to avoid them; and entirely by chance they selected an easterly route—the route that Spike and Troll had chosen for the same reason. Thus it happened that a week later they received definite proof that they were on the right trail. At a village of friendly blacks they were told that a safari of nine that included two white men and a white girl had stopped overnight with the tribe. The chief had furnished guides to the next friendly village to the north.

Wood talked to these men and learned that the chief of the village to which

they had guided the safari had also furnished them guides for the next stage of their journey, and for the first time in weeks the young American found hope rekindled in his bosom; from what the villagers had seen, there was no indication that Gonfala was being ill-treated.

All the marvelous tracking skill of the Lord of the Jungle had been nullified by a heavy rain, and then chance had set in and sent him upon the wrong trail and Stanley Wood upon the right one.

Through such a trivial vagary of Fate lives were jeopardized and men died.

CHAPTER V

STRANGERS

SPIKE and Troll were holding palaver with the chief of a northern tribe. They had come far, guided from village to village by friendly natives. Luck had been with them, but now this good fortune seemed to be at an end. They were trying to persuade the old chief to furnish them with guides to the next village.

"No more villages," he said. He did not like these white men. He held them in contempt because their safari was small and poor, too poor even to rob. They had nothing but two rifles—and the girl. He had been thinking about her. He was also thinking of a black sultan to the east to whom she might be sold, but he put this thought from him. He did not wish any trouble with the white men. Native soldiers had come to his village once under white officers and punished him for ill-treating the safari of some white hunters. They had come from a great distance just to do that, and the incident had given him vast respect for the power and the long arm of the white man.

"What is north?" asked Spike.

"Mountains," replied the chief.

"That," said Spike to Troll, "is like the country where my valley is. It is surrounded by mountains." He tried to explain to the chief the valley for which they were searching and the tribe that inhabited it.

A cunning look came into the eyes of the chief. He wished to be rid of these men, and he saw how he might do it. "I know the valley," he said. "Tomorrow I will give you guides."

"I guess maybe we aint lucky!" gloated Spike, as he and Troll came from their palaver with the chief and sat down beside Gonfala. The girl did not inquire

why; but Spike explained, nevertheless. "It won't be long now," he said, "before we're safe and sound in my valley."

"You won't be safe," said Gonfala. "Tarzan and Stanlee Wood will come soon—very soon now."

"They won't never find us where we're goin'."

"The natives will guide them from village to village just as they have guided you," she reminded him. "It will be very easy to follow you."

"Yes," admitted Spike, "they can follow us up to where these people will guide us."

"But there we will stop. They will find you there."

"We don't stop there," said Spike. "I guess I aint nobody's fool. The valley these people are takin' us to, aint my valley; but once I get in this here first valley, I can find the other. I passed through it comin' out of my valley. It's about two marches east of where we want to go. When we get to this here first valley, we won't need no guides the rest of the way; so, when we leave this here first valley, we'll tell 'em we're goin' to the coast, an' start off to the east; then we'll swing around back way to the north of 'em an' go west to my valley." And there won't nobody never find us."

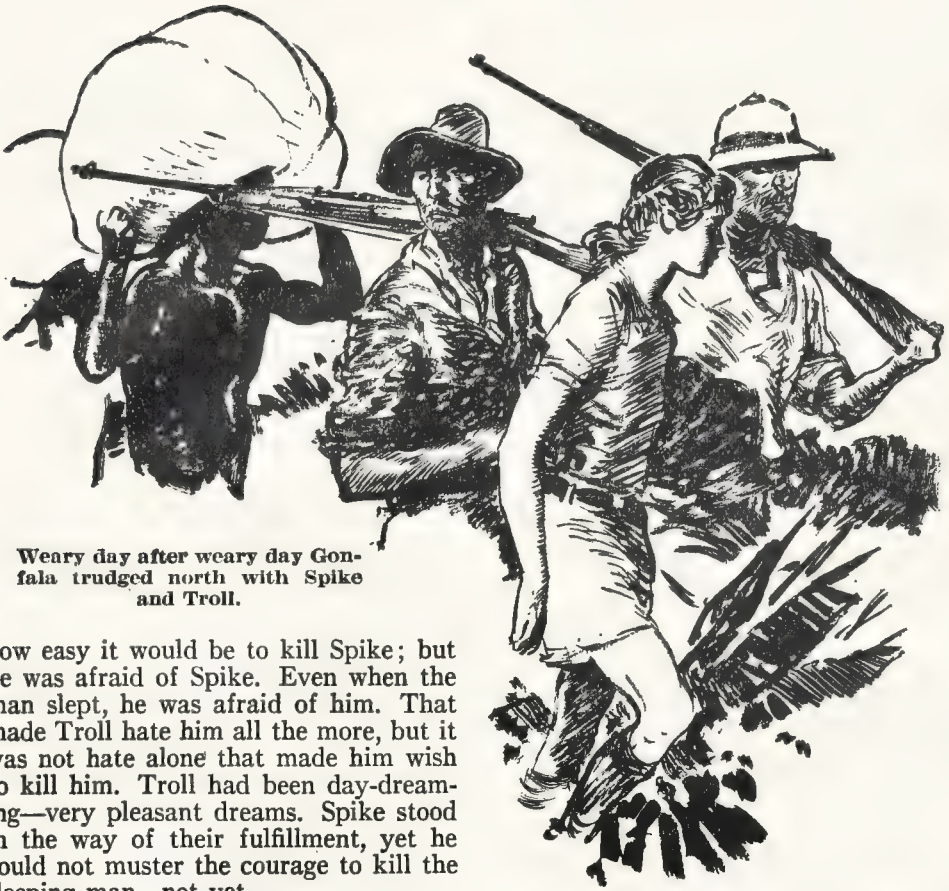
"Tarzan and Stanlee Wood will find you," insisted Gonfala.

"I wisht you'd shut up about this here Tarzan and 'Stanlee' Wood. I'm sick of hearin' of 'em. It's gettin' on my nerves."

Troll sat staring at Gonfala through half-closed lids. He had not spoken much all day, but he had looked much at Gonfala. Always when she caught his glance he turned his eyes away.

THEY had been able to sustain themselves this far by killing game, trading the meat to natives for other articles of food, principally vegetables and corn. Tonight they feasted royally and went to their beds early. Gonfala occupied a hut by herself; the two men had another near by. They had had a hard day's trek, and tired muscles combined with a heavy meal to induce early slumber. Gonfala and Spike were asleep almost as soon as they had stretched themselves on their sleeping-mats.

Not so Troll. He remained very much awake, thinking. He listened to the heavy breathing of Spike that denoted that he slept soundly. He listened to the sounds in the village. Gradually they died out—the village slept. Troll thought



Weary day after weary day Gonfala trudged north with Spike and Troll.

how easy it would be to kill Spike; but he was afraid of Spike. Even when the man slept, he was afraid of him. That made Troll hate him all the more, but it was not hate alone that made him wish to kill him. Troll had been day-dreaming—very pleasant dreams. Spike stood in the way of their fulfillment, yet he could not muster the courage to kill the sleeping man—not yet.

"Later," he thought.

He crawled to the doorway of the hut and looked out. There was no sign of waking life in the village. The silence was almost oppressive; it extended out into the black void of night beyond the village. As Troll rose to his feet outside the hut he stumbled over a cooking-pot; the noise, against the background of silence, seemed terrific. Cursing under his breath, the man halted, listening.

Spike, disturbed but not fully awakened, moved in his sleep and turned over; the first dead slumber of early night was broken. Thereafter he would be more restless and more easily awakened. Troll did not hear him move, and after a moment of listening he tiptoed away. Stealthily he approached the hut in which Gonfala slept.

The girl, wakened by the noise, lay staring wide-eyed out into the lesser darkness framed by the doorway of her hut. She heard footsteps approaching. Would they pass, or were they coming here for her? Weeks of danger, weeks of suspicion, weeks of being constantly on guard had wrought upon her until she sensed menace in the most ordinary oc-

currences; so now she felt, intuitively, she believed, that some one was coming to her hut. And for what purpose, other than evil, should one come thus stealthily by night?

Raising herself upon her hands, she crouched, waiting. Every muscle tense, she scarcely breathed. Whatever it was, it was coming closer, closer. Suddenly a darker blotch loomed in the low opening that was the doorway. An animal or a man on all fours was creeping in!

"Who are you? What do you want?" It was a muffled scream of terror.

"Shut up! It's me. Don't make no noise. I want to talk to you."

She recognized the voice, but it did not allay her fears. The man crept closer to her. He was by her side now. She could hear his labored breathing.

"Go away," she said. "We can talk tomorrow."

"Listen!" he said. "You don't want to go to that there valley and spend the rest of your life with Spike an' a bunch o' niggers, do you? When he gets us there, he'll kill me an' have you all to himself. I know him—he's that kind of a rat. Be good to me an' I'll take you

away. Me an' you'll beat it with the diamond. We'll go to Europe, to Paris."

"I don't want to go anywhere with you. Go away! Get out of here, before I call Spike."

"One squawk out of you, an' I'll wring your neck! You're goin' to be good to me whether you want to or not." He reached out in the darkness and seized her, groping for her throat.

Before he found it, she had time to voice a single scream and cry out once: "*Spike!*" Then Troll closed choking fingers upon her throat and bore her down beneath his weight. She struggled and fought, striking him in the face, tearing at the fingers at her throat.

WAKENED by the scream, Spike raised upon an elbow. "Troll!" he called. "Did you hear anything?" There was no response. "Troll!" He reached out to the mat where Troll should have been. He was not there. Instantly his suspicions were aroused, and because of his own evil mind, they centered unquestioningly upon the truth.

In a dozen strides he was at Gonfala's hut; and as he scrambled through the doorway, Troll met him with an oath and a snarl. Clinching, the two men rolled upon the floor, biting, gouging, striking, kicking; occasionally a lurid oath or a scream of pain punctuated their heavy breathing. Gonfala crouched at the back of the hut, terrified for fear that one of them would kill the other, removing the only factor of safety she possessed.

They rolled closer to her; and she edged to one side, out of their way. Her new position was nearer the doorway. It suggested the possibility of temporary escape, of which she was quick to take advantage. In the open, she commenced to worry again for fear that one of the men would be killed.

She saw that some of the natives, aroused by the commotion within her hut, had come from theirs. She ran to them, begging them to stop the fight. The chief was there, and he was very angry because he had been disturbed. He ordered several warriors to go and separate the men. They hesitated, but finally approached the hut. As they did so, the sounds of conflict ended; and a moment later Spike crawled into the open and staggered to his feet.

Gonfala feared that the worst had happened. Of the two men, she had feared Spike the more; for while both

were equally brutal and devoid of decency, Troll was not as courageous as his fellow. Him she might have circumvented through his cowardice. At least, that she had thought until tonight; now she was not so sure. But she was sure that Spike was always the more dangerous. Her one thought now was to escape him, if only temporarily. Inflamed by his fight, secure in the knowledge that Troll was dead, what might he not do? To a far corner of the village she ran and hid herself between a hut and the palisade. Each moment she expected to hear Spike hunting for her, but he did not come. He did not even know that she had left her hut where he thought he had left her with the dead Troll, and he had gone to his own hut to nurse his wounds.

But Troll was not dead. In the morning Spike found him bloody and dazed, squatting in the village street, staring at the ground. Much to Spike's disgust, Troll seemed not even badly injured. He looked up as the other approached.

"Wot happened?" he asked.

Spike looked at him suspiciously for a moment; then his expression turned to puzzlement. "A bloomin' lorry ran over you," he said.

"A bloomin' lorry!" Troll repeated. "I never even seen it."

Gonfala, looking around a corner of the hut behind which she had been hiding, saw the two men and breathed a sigh of relief. Troll was not dead; she was not to be left alone with Spike. She came toward them. Troll glanced up.

"Who's the dame?" he asked.

Gonfala and Spike looked at one another, and the latter tapped his forehead. "A bit balmy," he explained.

"She don't look balmy," said Troll. "She looks like my sister—my sister." He continued to stare at her dully.

"We better get some grub an' be on our way," interrupted Spike. He seemed nervous and ill at ease. It is one thing to kill a man, quite another to have done such a thing as this to him.

IT was a silent, preoccupied trio that moved off behind two guides in a northeasterly direction after the morning meal had been eaten. Spike walked ahead; Troll kept close to Gonfala. He was often looking at her, a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"Wot's your name?" he asked.

Gonfala had a sudden inspiration. Perhaps it was madness to hope that it

might succeed, but her strait was desperate. "Don't tell me you don't remember your sister's name," she exclaimed.

Troll stared at her, his face expressionless. "Wot is your name?" he asked. "Everything is sort o' blurry-like in my memory."

"Gonfala," she said. "You remember, don't you—your sister?"

"Gonfala; oh, yes—my sister."

"I'm glad you're here," she said; "for now you won't let anyone harm me, will you?"

"Harm you? They better not try it on," he exclaimed belligerently.

The safari had halted, and they caught up with Spike who was talking with the two guides.

"The beggars won't go no farther," he explained. "We aint made more'n five miles an' they quits us, quits us cold."

"Why?" asked Gonfala.

"They say the country ahead is taboo. They say they's white men up ahead that'll catch 'em an' make slaves out of 'em an' feed 'em to lions."

"Let's turn back," suggested the girl. "What's the use anyway, Spike? If you get killed the Gonfal won't do you any good. If you turn around and take me back safely to my friends, I'll do my best to get them to give you the Gonfal and let you go. I give you my word that I will, and I know that Stanlee Wood will do anything that I ask."

Spike shook his head. "Nothin' doin'! I'm goin' where I'm goin', an' you're goin' with me." He bent close and stared boldly into her eyes. "If I had to give up one or t'other, I'd give up the Gonfal before I would you—but I'm not goin' to give up neither."

The girl shrugged. "I've given you your chance," she said. "You are a fool not to take it."

SO they pushed on without guides farther and farther into the uncharted wilderness; each new day Spike was confident that this day he would stumble upon the enchanted valley of his dreams, and each night he prophesied for the morrow.

Troll's mental condition remained unchanged. He thought that Gonfala was his sister, and he showed her what little consideration there was in his gross philosophy of life to accord any one. The protective instinct of the brutal male was stimulated in her behalf; and for this she was grateful, not to Troll but

to fate. Where he had been, where he was going, he appeared not to know or to care. He trudged on day after day in dumb silence, asking no questions, showing no interest in anything or anyone other than Gonfala. He was obsessed by a belief that she was in danger, and so he constantly carried one of the rifles the better to protect her.

For many days they had been in mountainous country searching for the elusive valley, and at the end of a hard trek they made camp on the shoulder of a mountain beside a little spring of clear water. As night fell the western sky was tinged with the golden red of a dying sunset. Long after the natural phenomenon should have faded into the blackness of the night the red glow persisted.

GONFALA sat gazing at it, dreamily fascinated. Spike watched it, too, with growing excitement. The blacks watched it with fear. Troll sat down cross-legged, staring at the ground.

Spike sat down beside Gonfala. "You know wot that is, girlie?" he asked. "You know it aint no sunset, don't you?"

"It looks like a fire—a forest fire," she said.

"It's a fire, all right. I aint never been there, but I've seen that light before. I figure it's from the inside of one of them volcanoes, but I'll tell you wot it means to us—it means we found our valley. When I was in that valley I seen that light to the south at night. All we got to do now is trek along a little west o' north, an' in maybe four or five marches we orter be there; then, girlie, you an' me's goin' to settle down to housekeepin'."

The girl made no reply. She was no longer afraid; for she knew that Troll would kill Spike if she asked him to; and now she had no reason to fear being alone with Troll, other than the waning possibility that he might regain his memory. . . .

Morning found Spike almost jovial, so jubilant was he at the prospect of soon finding his valley; but his joviality disappeared when he discovered that two of his six men had deserted during the night. He was in a cold sweat until he found that they had not taken the Gonfal with them. After that, he determined, he would sleep with the great stone at his side, taking no more chances. He could do this now without arousing the suspicions of Troll, for Troll had no suspicions. He paid no attention to the Gonfal nor ever mentioned it,

Toward noon a great valley opened before them, the length of which ran in the direction Spike wished to travel; and so they dropped down into it, to easy traveling after their long days in the mountains.

The valley was partially forested, the trees growing more profusely along the course of a river that wound down from the upper end of the valley, crossed it diagonally, and disappeared in a cleft in the hills to the west; but considerable areas were open and covered with lush grasses, while on the east side of the valley was a veritable forest of bamboo.

Spike, not knowing if the valley were inhabited, nor, if it were, the nature or temper of its inhabitants, chose to follow the wooded strip that bordered the river, taking advantage of the cover it afforded. Along the river he found a wide elephant-trail, and here they were making excellent speed when one of the blacks stopped suddenly, listened intently, and pointed ahead.

"What's the matter?" demanded Spike.

"Men coming," replied the black.

"I don't hear nothin'," said Spike. "Do you?" he turned to Gonfala.

She nodded. "Yes, I hear voices."

"Then we better get off the trail and hide—at least until we see who they are. Here, all of you! Here's a little trail leadin' off here."

HE herded the party off to the left of the main trail along a winding path through rather heavy underbrush, but they had covered little more than a hundred yards when they came out onto the open plain. Here they stopped at the edge of the wood, waiting and listening. Presently the voices of men came plainly to their ears, constantly closer and closer, until suddenly it dawned on them all that the men they heard were approaching along the little trail through which they had sought to escape.

Spike looked for a place of concealment, but there was none. The thick underbrush was almost impenetrable behind them, while on the other hand the plain stretched away across the valley to the hills upon the west. As a last resort he turned north along the edge of the wood, urging the others to haste until all were running.

Glancing back, Gonfala saw the party that had alarmed them debouching onto the plain. First came a dozen huge

negroes, each pair of whom held a lion in leash. Following these were six white men strangely garbed. Even at a distance she could see that their trappings were gorgeous. Behind them followed a score or more of other white men. They were similarly dressed but in quieter raiment. They carried spears as well as swords. One of the warriors carried something dangling at his side which, even at a distance, could not have been mistaken for other than a bloody human head.

"They're white men," Gonfala called to Spike. "Maybe they'd be friendly."

"They don't look like it to me," he replied. "I aint takin' no chances after wot I been through gettin' you an' the Gonfal this far."

"Anyone would be better than you," said the girl, and stopped.

"Come on, you fool!" he cried; and, coming back, seized her by the arm and sought to drag her with him.

"Troll!" she cried. "Help!"

TROLL was ahead of them, but now he turned; seeing Spike and the girl scuffling, he ran back. His face was white and distorted with rage. "Le' go her," he bellowed. "Le' go my sister!" Then he was upon Spike; and the two went down, striking, kicking, and biting.

For an instant Gonfala hesitated, undecided. She looked at the two beasts upon the ground, and then she turned in the direction of the strange warriors. No one, she reasoned, could be more of a menace to her than Spike; but she soon saw that the decision had already been made for her—the entire party was moving in their direction. She stood and waited as they approached.

They had covered about half the distance when a warrior in the lead halted and pointed up the valley. For an instant they hesitated; then they turned and started off across the valley at a run, the lions tugging at their leashes and dragging their keepers after them, the warriors in formation behind them.

The girl, wondering at their sudden flight, looked up the valley in the direction in which the warrior had pointed. The sight that met her eyes filled her with amazement. A herd of perhaps a hundred elephants carrying warriors on their backs was moving rapidly down upon them.

On the ground at her feet, Spike and Troll still bit and gouged and kicked.

Even more exciting events mark the second (in our next issue) of the three installments into which we have divided this fine novel.

Five years ago we published Mr. Jamieson's "With the Night Mail—1932," making reference to Kipling's famous "With the Night Mail"—a story written before there were any airplanes at all. Mr. Jamieson's story received much favorable comment and was included in the book "Short Story Hits of 1932." So fast does the world move, however, that already the small specialized mail-plane has given way to the huge mail-carrying passenger-planes; hence the dramatic story which follows—and which will also, we predict, attract much attention.

FLOODLIGHTS on the hangars beat down on the loading-ramp with a hard white light that pushed the midnight darkness back across the field. Outside the fence, on the ramp, was a striking contrast between a bygone day of aviation, and a day already here. There stood Bill Thorne's little night mail ship, eight or nine years old, its fabric wings, its fuselage and its open cockpit looking ancient underneath the glare. And ahead of it, towering above it, was the first of the new crates the company was buying to displace those little ships like Bill's—a gleaming twelve-ton giant with slender metal wings.

But I wasn't paying much attention to the planes. I was watching Bill Thorne, and thinking that he must be realizing more and more what he was up against. Bill was not a man inclined to worry much, but this was one time when he had ample reason to.

Yet he concealed all trace of it right now. He was standing there beside his plane, talking with a group of boys. They were nice kids, every one in Boy Scout uniform. They thronged around Bill Thorne like a team of football-players in a huddle with their quarterback. They all talked at once, and only now and then could you hear what anyone was saying. Bill let them look inside the cockpit, let them lift his parachute, inspect his goggles and his earphones.

"Gee, Bill, don't you wish that they'd let you keep on flying ships like this?" one little bright-faced boy exclaimed.

Bill Thorne grinned ruefully. Before he could say anything, a piping voice declared with fine conviction, "That big ship's safe, but this one's dangerous, isn't it? That's why you wear a parachute, isn't it, Bill?"



With the

Illustrated by
Grattan Condon

Standing there, I realized that these boys thought Bill Thorne was practically a god. Dan Murvis, the pilot who was taking the big crate to New York, came out and walked up the loading-platform and disappeared into the fuselage. The kids saw him, but paid no attention. There was no glamour for them in the new plane; the little one was glamorous because it flew the mail and seemed to reek of tradition.

Or perhaps, I thought, they liked the little one because of Bill. He let them come out to the field occasionally to see him take off for Chicago. He had told them stories of his work. They knew about the time a motor had thrown off a counter-balance at eight thousand feet above the Smokies; they had lived with him as he had climbed up on the cowl and jumped to safety with his parachute. You see, Bill Thorne loved boys, and these boys in particular; he was the master of their troop.

Now, as they stood there, I saw a tall lad bring a box that had been by the fence. The boys were silent, with a kind of hushed expectancy. The tall lad held



"When I have to push the big stuff I can push it," I had often heard Bill say. But now, I saw, he wasn't sure.

Last Night Mail

By

LELAND JAMIESON

up a beautiful little airplane, a model of the ship Bill flew. It was set on a walnut pedestal with a silver plaque beneath.

"Here, Bill," the boy said. "Here! We made this for you."

Bill grinned, and he was so pleased and touched he couldn't say a word, at first. Then he said, "Why, say, now! Thanks!" He held it up, looked it over. It was a lovely little thing. "What's this for?" He pressed a switch, and the tiny propeller spun valiantly.

"The wing covering is real airplane fabric, with real airplane dope," the tall boy said. "You like it, don't you, Bill?"

"Like it!" Bill exclaimed. "It's—"

"We thought you'd like to have it, since you couldn't fly ships like it any more."

"It's mighty nice," Bill said, and you could see by looking at his face how nice he thought it was.

I stood there watching, wondering now what must be passing through his mind. There was an acid irony in this whole situation. As a flyer, Bill Thorne was standing on the brink of tragedy; because for eight years he had flown nothing but night mail, in little ships—and while this

inspired hero-worship in those boys, in another week that fact might end his whole career. . . .

Five years ago some of us had said to him, "You'd better hock that run you've got and get on big ships while they're growing. Some day there won't be any more night mail—but by that time the passenger crates will be so fast and complicated that you'll have to go to engineering school to learn to handle them."

Bill had said, "I'd like to check out on the big stuff and fly a trip or two—but I'm sticking to night mail as long as possible. I like it."

He couldn't check out on a passenger plane and fly a trip or two, however. It cost the company several hundred dollars to give a man transition to the bigger stuff, and the brass-hats would spend it only for a man who was going to fly the big stuff all the time. So when Bill discovered that, he stayed where he was, on little ships, pushing the night mail across the Smokies two nights out of four.

And now, at last, the little ships were coming off the run, displaced by crates that weighed twelve tons. We'd received

the first one yesterday. Bill, inspecting it, had gone up in the cockpit and sat down in the pilot's seat. I knew him well, and until that moment I had never seen him show a trace of lack of confidence. But right then he had looked astonished and worried and upset.

"This isn't like the last passenger jobs the outfit bought," he said concernedly. "This crate's twice as big!"

It wasn't twice as big, but I suppose it seemed that way to Bill. And standing there, watching the expression on his face, I thought I understood the doubt and apprehension that were passing through his mind; I didn't, but I thought I did. He had always said that one airplane was like another. "A good pilot," I had often heard him say, "can fly anything another good pilot can fly. When I have to push the big stuff I can push it, I expect."

But now, I saw, he wasn't sure. Engineering progress had proceeded this last year with amazing speed, as reflected by this plane. And Bill had not progressed in his ability to fly at all. He had never flown anything one-eighth as big as this. And by next week he must qualify to fly it—not just take it off the ground and bring it down again, but handle it safely and surely on one engine, with the other engine dead—landing it that way, and flying it that way on instruments while he worked a radio-beam problem, simulating being "blind" and lost in bad weather. We were getting delivery on three new ships this week. If Bill hadn't qualified to fly them on his run before they were placed upon his run, he would no longer have a job.

I was thinking what a tough thing it would be if he failed to do that, when the chief clerk in the air-mail field post-office yelled through the sliding door, "Weighing out Chicago in five minutes!" It was time for Bill to go inside and sign his weather clearance. Grinning, he thanked the boys again, and walked down to the office.

I JOINED him in the weather bureau; I was riding west tonight, to California, to bring back the second of the new planes, and I was interested in weather too. We studied the weather map together. He spanned the probable travel of a "low" with thumb and forefinger, squinting at it, and looked up.

"I wish I'd taken your advice five years ago," he said; and his tone was thin and harried with a tension he couldn't hide.

"When did you ever take anybody's advice?" I gibed.

"I'm learning," he said dryly. "Hungry Durst left word he'd check me out on the big ships when I get back from this run. I was counting on getting in my time with you."

"If you could fly one with me, you can fly one with Durst. But if you start worrying, you won't fly one for anybody."

He made a wry face. "I don't like to trust my job to a guy who hates my guts. If you—"

"Hungry Durst hate your guts?" I snorted. "Don't—"

Just then Collins, the dispatcher, burst in and yelled, "Mail's loading, Bill. Come on!"

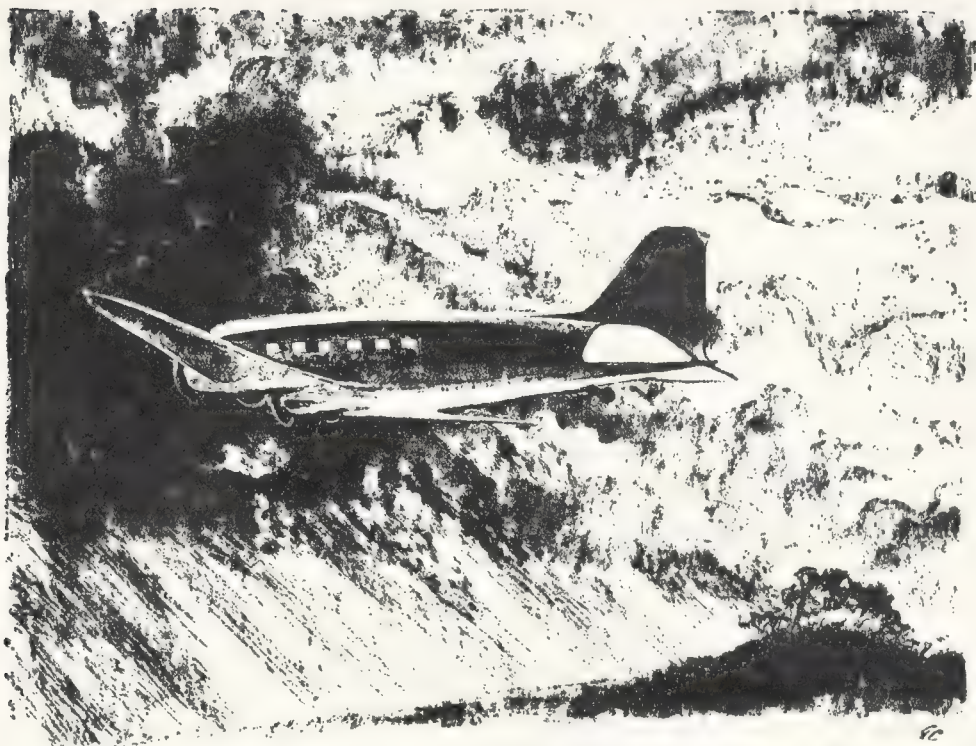
Bill said, "I'll see you, Perry," and ran out.

AFTER my ship had taken off, I sat and thought about what Bill had said. I couldn't figure out what he had meant. He was probably the best friend I had on the line, but I knew nothing of any conflict he had ever had with Hungry Durst.

Bill was one of the actual old-timers of aviation, although I never thought of him as being old; he was forty-one or so. But he'd been flying since war days; and when the bonanza in commercial aviation came along in 1929, he'd left the Army to start flying night mail with the air line.

He was the strangest combination of hard guy and softy I had ever seen, and that may have been one of the reasons I liked him so much. He was a little guy, and plain as an old flying moccasin. No matter what happened, he never got excited or sore; when things went badly, he wore a kind of lugubrious calm. At such a time, if you asked him how he was doing, he was apt to squint his steady gray eyes, and spit through his teeth with a "thwack" and say: "The devil's my shadow today."

And very often, the devil was; for Bill Thorne had had a lot of hard luck in his life. He'd lost his first wife and his child in an automobile crash, and had come out of it himself with a stiff leg, so that now he walked with a very slight drag in his gait. That tragedy lay in the dim past, but there had been more recent things, such as the time a war buddy had come to him, broke and hungry, and Bill had staked him to an airplane to go barnstorming on a partnership basis; and the guy had cracked up and become involved



Night engulfed us like a photographer's curtain flung over our heads.

in a damage-suit which finally cost Bill eighteen thousand dollars.

So you can see that he was a softy; in his life, I suspect he had given two or three guys the shirt off his back, which was a very bad thing for a man in his position to do. But he was that way, and nothing could change him.

YET, on the other hand, he was a hard guy—he was a hard guy in a cockpit. There was no weather he wouldn't fly, and very little he hadn't flown, long before the days of the radio and refinements of instruments. He loved bad weather; he was never so much at home as when the ceiling was down to two hundred feet, and he could swing on his parachute and drag that bad foot out to the cockpit and climb in and gun away into the soup.

That was the reason he had stayed on the night mail all these years. He wanted that parachute, and the solitude of the black sky when the wind and exhaust tugged at his ears. Tonight, while I rode toward the Coast on the cushions, he was pushing northward somewhere over the Smokies. It made me feel sort of melancholy to think that he had only two trips left, before the big crates took over his run.

But this business of his being afraid of Hungry Durst was something I knew nothing about, and while I was at the Coast getting ready to come back with the new ship, I worried over it a good deal. Durst was the chief check pilot—I was his assistant—and he was a very good man to have on your side in a battle, for he drew plenty of water with the brass-hats.

He was an engineer, and a good one; but beyond all that, he had an uncanny knack of judging pilots. A tall, irascibly exacting man whose tongue was capable of being a whip-lash of sarcasm, he was never completely satisfied with anything. He was called "Hungry" because of his gaunt look, and his constant appetite.

Personally, I liked him all right, and not just because he was my immediate boss; I really admired him. There was no question as to his sincerity and honesty. He was considerably younger than most of the senior pilots, and infinitely less experienced in line flying, yet he was the ideal type of man for a job that very few pilots wanted: He could not be influenced by talk, nor bulldozed by threats, and he took plenty of time in forming a judgment.

So, knowing him as I did, there was one thing I was sure of: If Bill Thorne

was afraid of him, there was a very good reason. I knew that Hungry was not a vindictive man. Yet, vindictive or not, it worried me to think of his being prejudiced against Bill Thorne, for Bill was going to have trouble enough without that. All the way back from California I wondered what Bill had done to make Hungry Durst hate him.

WELL, I landed and turned the new ship over to the line chief, and walked into the dispatcher's office—and there was Bill, waiting for me. I said, "Hi! Boy, I'm glad to get out of that showcase! How the hell are you, anyway?"

He gave me a kind of twisted grin, and said: "This time the devil crawled into my hip pocket. I've still got him there."

I looked at him for a second, and this was a pretty sad business, I could tell.

I said: "What happened?"

"Hungry Durst says I can't fly."

"Nuts," I said. "Come on. We'll go up and talk to him. I'll get him to let me ride around with you."

"No," Bill said, "there's no use to do that." He walked over and sat down on an old leather sofa that was a relic of promotional days, and I sat down beside him. In a tone of dull disgust he said, "I guess I'm washed up. Those damn' airplanes—they've got more handles and levers and gadgets than a pipe-organ has stops. Durst says I can't fly 'em—and the funny thing is, he's right."

Sitting there, I couldn't think of anything adequate to say. Seeing that hopeless, hurt look in Bill's eyes sort of got me. Neither one of us said a word for five minutes. The office was filled with a medley of noises: Teletypewriters thudded out weather messages with a measured cadence of typebars; on the other side of a long glass panel radio operators sat before blatting receivers, creating a din that filled the whole building as they "worked" planes in the air. And outside, on the ramp, the enormous, silvery new plane that I had brought in was being revved up by mechanics, its exhaust seeming to make the earth tremble under its wheels.

"How long did you fly?" I asked.

"Two hours."

"What happened?"

"I made a mess of it."

"What's this, between you and Hungry?"

He shrugged, and held out his hands in a gesture of uselessness.

I said, "You always were a scrapper, Bill. You can lick this."

He shook his head slowly, and his eyes had a kind of stunned look. "No, not a chance—not a chance."

Watching him, I said: "If you really feel that way about it, there isn't."

Of course, his problem was a big one, because for twenty years he had flown small, light airplanes, and now he was trying to step from a three-thousand-pound ship into a twenty-four-thousand-pound one; he was trying to adapt himself to a seventy-mile-an-hour landing speed instead of a fifty-mile one; he was trying to learn to see at a glance, and manipulate accurately, not the dozen elementary instruments and controls of his old plane, but well over a hundred in the new one.

Yet there was more to it than that, and it was plain that he did not want to talk about it. After a minute, I said, "Stick around. I just got in, and I want to run up to the office and check over my mail."

"Okay," he said.

BUT when I got up to the office, I didn't look at the mail; I went in to see Hungry Durst, and I was feeling a little pugnacious. He was sitting at his desk fiddling with a slide rule that was about three feet long. When I came in, he looked up and said, "Well, you made good time getting back." He sawed on the slip-stick and wrote down a figure and suddenly inquired: "What did Bill Thorne tell you?"

I floundered a moment on that, for I hadn't meant to go into the matter so bluntly. "He says you say he can't fly, and he says you're right."

Durst wrote down another figure, and leaned forward and fished a piece of peanut brittle out of a paper bag on his desk. It made a lump in his cheek. He said: "Have some? . . . That all he told you?"

"Yes. But look here, Hungry. I've known Bill Thorne for a long time, and I know the guy *can* fly. Maybe he'll have trouble getting used to the new crates, because they're pretty complicated, after what he's been pushing. But he's quit trying—he's given up. There's something the matter."

"Sure," Durst said. He took another piece of brittle, and chewed it a moment. Then his blue eyes came up with all their piercing straightness and pinned me there, and he said, "Didn't Bill Thorne tell you about me?"

"No." I discovered that I was holding my breath.

Durst looked as solemn as a deacon inspecting the collection plate. Then, after a minute, he began to talk, his voice low and controlled and yet filled with a sort of bitter vehemence. Perhaps it was that acid emotion I could feel behind his words, or perhaps it was only the words themselves, but suddenly I was no longer in this office; I was at the Army Advance Flying School, at Kelly Field, a thousand miles away.

IT was a bright, cool morning in 1927. A column of flying cadets were marching down the hill from barracks, down between the long row of planes on one side and the long row of hangars on the other. They came at a brisk step, helmets on heads and chin-straps folded over their ears, parachutes over their shoulders. They looked very precise and military and fine in their clean flying suits. The cadet captain barked orders that brought them into company front before the low white operations building. As they stood there, a DH with a number 39 painted boldly on both sides of the nose whispered past in a flat glide over the "line," and sat down in a cloud of dust on the field. The cadet captain eyed it momentarily, forgetting his duty; then he surveyed the ranks of his command, and barked: "Fall out and report to your instructors."

He himself turned and walked toward that ship which now came taxiing back to the line; when its exhaust had silenced and its propeller had fanned to a stop, he waited for the pilot to climb from the cockpit. Then he stepped forward. He saluted, clicking his heels smartly.

"Cadet Durst reporting for check, sir," he said.

Lieutenant Thorne, the toughest instructor on Kelly Field, returned the salute, looking the boy over carefully. "What are you up for?"

There was no need to ask that, Cadet Durst thought resentfully. He was up for "wash-out." But he said sturdily, "For elimination, sir." He had to guard his voice when he said it, for the thought made him sick and weak. More than anything in the world, he wanted his wings; he wanted to graduate from the Advance Flying School with his class. But he said, "For elimination, sir."

"That's too bad," Lieutenant Thorne said. "What's your trouble?"

"I'm having trouble with eights, sir."

"Well, son, either you can fly, or you can't. Let's find out."

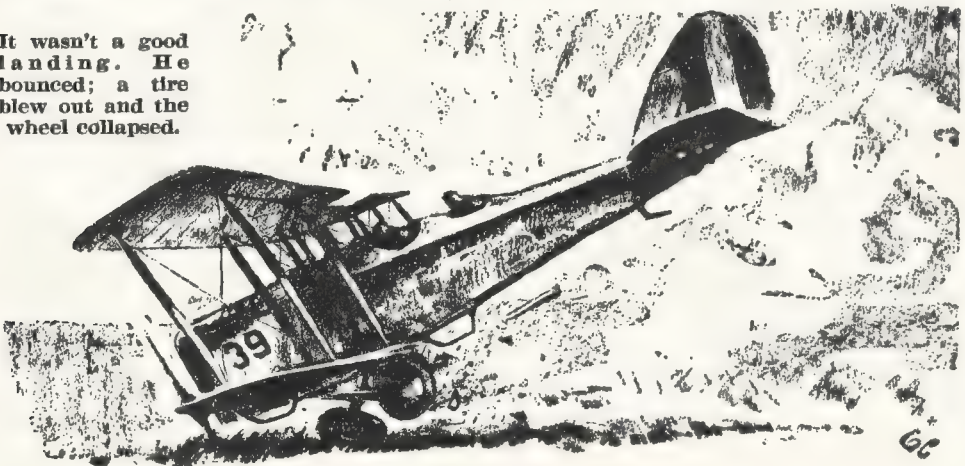
"I can fly, sir. I know I can fly. But sometimes I'm slow catching on to things. If you'll just give me a chance—"

"You'll have the same chance everyone else has. Take me out and show me some eights."

So Cadet Durst got into the front cockpit, and Lieutenant Thorne got into the rear. They took off south, over the Frio City Road, out past the bluff. Cadet Durst picked out his points, and did eights at five hundred feet. He did eights at three hundred feet, then at two, then at one, wheeling his ship into its turns, always into the wind. He flew until his arms ached from shoving the stick. Then, at Lieutenant Thorne's signal, he went back to Kelly and landed.

It wasn't a good landing. He bounced. When the wheels hit the second time, a tire blew out, and a wheel collapsed. Before he knew what was happening, the

It wasn't a good landing. He bounced; a tire blew out and the wheel collapsed.



ship was nosing down, down, sickeningly. He heard the splintering of wood, and Thorne's shouts behind him, and then the jarring impact of the tail on the ground as the ship went on its back. Dust was flying into his mouth, and he was unfastening his belt and clawing his way out, thinking of fire. He was out in a second, but Thorne was out sooner than that.

"I'm sorry, sir," Cadet Durst said. It sounded idiotic, but it was the only thing he could think of right then—of how sorry he was.

"*Thwick!*" Lieutenant Thorne spat through his teeth in that way he had. "That was a sweet ship." Then, "Did you say you thought you could fly? Your eights were lousy." He didn't wait for an answer. Ambulances were clanging over the field toward them; a trio of fire engines were smoking dust out of the dry grass. Lieutenant Thorne sent them for the wrecker. Then he said, "No, son, I'm afraid you haven't it in you. You're through."

"But I know I *can* fly!" the boy exclaimed frantically. "That was an accident. It could have happened to anybody!" And then he quit pleading, for he saw it was getting him nothing. A burning hatred began to make him light-headed. He yelled, "All right, damn you! All right, I'll show you! Go on and wash me out—go on, but some day I'll make you wish you'd never done this! I—"

Lieutenant Thorne halted him sharply, "That's all, Durst!" He said: "You feel just as every other boy has felt in your position. But you must understand that some men are born with the ability to fly, and others without it. I'm sorry—really sorry. This has nothing to do with cracking up my ship, and it isn't a personal matter at all. I have to form an opinion, and the opinion is—"

"You're wrong, I tell you!" Cadet Durst begged, tears glazing his eyes. But Lieutenant Thorne had set out on foot toward the line.

SUDDENLY, when Hungry Durst's voice stopped, I was back in his office, standing before him, seeing everything with a clear understanding. I thought, "So this is the pay-off—after ten years." I felt hot and cold all over at the same time. I heard myself say, "Hungry, you wouldn't do it! You wouldn't do a rotten trick like that!" I was shaking all over and the words kept pouring out and

I couldn't stop them. "Bill Thorne has forgotten more about flying than you'll ever know! Look what you're doing! He's past forty—if you kick him out, he's washed up—he'll never get another job with a line, not even as a co-pilot, because the lines want young co-pilots. You know damn' well he can fly!"

Hungry Durst didn't wiggle an eyelash. He took another piece of brittle, and wrote down a figure, and said, "Can he? You're wrong about that. He's washed up. But if you'll feel better, suppose you take him out and see for yourself."

So I went down, and got Bill by the arm, and said, "Come on, guy. You're going to show me how to push one of these big crates around."

He brightened up something wonderful, and we went out to the ship. I followed him up through the narrow companionway that led to the cockpit out of the cabin—past the mail and baggage compartments, past the steam boiler, past the banks of radio receivers and the transmitter panel. He sat down in the deep leather seat on the left, and I sat down on the right.

BUT up here, I noticed right away, a kind of bewilderment seemed to come over him, as if he were befuddled by the immensity, the complexity, of this plane. And, of course, it was complex. The flight instruments were grouped in the center of the instrument board: turn-and-bank, gyro compass, magnetic compass, artificial horizon, rate-of-climb, two air-speed indicators, two sensitive altimeters; the power instruments on the left included two tachometers, two manifold pressure-gauges, an engine synchronizer, besides the de-icer pressure-gauge. The engine instruments on the right were gas-gauges for the four fuel-tanks, two fuel pressure-gauges and two warning lights, two oil pressure-gauges and two warning lights, two carburetor temperature-gauges, two mixture-gauges, two oil-temperature gauges, two head-temperature-gauges. And then there were the landing-gear warning lights and the cabin-door warning light, the clocks, the suction-gauge, showing how much the pumps were putting out for the turn indicator, the horizon and the gyro.

Valves—there were valves all over the cockpit—to draw suction from the right engine or the left; to engage the hydraulic system to right engine or left; to bleed the manifold pressure-gauges;

to put the altimeters and air-speeds and rate-of-climb on the static pressure-line or the cockpit pressure-line. There were levers of every assortment—the brake-pedals, the throttles, the constant-speed propeller-controls, the mixture-controls, the carburetor heat-controls, the mechanical safety latches for the landing gear, the landing-gear retraction-control, the flap-control, the parking-brake lock, the oil radiator shutter-controls. There was a wheel to trim the ship fore-and-aft, and cranks for trimming it vertically and laterally.

I said: "It looks like a mess of stuff to think about, but don't try to think about it, yet. And try to forget the size of this plane—after all, it's just another airplane, with a lot of play-pretties stuck around to push and pull for amusement. The main thing you've got to remember is that you have twelve tons of weight to accelerate and decelerate in taking off and landing. You're used to a ton and a half, and a wing loading of thirteen pounds to the square foot; now you've got twelve tons, and a wing loading of twenty-four pounds."

"It's a wonder a thing like this flies!" Bill exclaimed.

"It flies, all right, if you always think in terms of the mass and inertia of twelve tons. Now I'll take off and go around once, and the second time you can take it."

I had him check with me the seventeen things to be done before starting the engines, and he had that part down all right. Taxying out, I said, "I suppose Hungry explained that these are geared engines with a prop ratio of eleven to sixteen. Each prop has a diameter of eleven feet six inches, and weighs three hundred and seventy pounds. Always remember to gun your throttles slowly, so you won't tear up the gears."

WHEN the green light flashed on the traffic control tower, I pushed the throttles open until the needles of the manifold-gauges swung around to show a forty-inch "boost"—forty inches of pressure coming out of the superchargers; the exhausts roared, and the acceleration pushed us back in our seats as the black runway smeared under the wheels.

At sixty-nine miles an hour the wheels unglued themselves from the ground. I yelled, "Up gear!" and Bill leaned down and unlocked the mechanical latches, and then reached over and pulled up on the red landing-gear valve. Above the

noise of the engines we could hear the groaning whine of the pumps that broke the knees of the struts and forced the wheels up snugly out of the wind in their respective nacelles.

As soon as I had pulled the boost back to 34.5, and had the engines slowed to two thousand revvs, I yelled: "Okay—you take her."

HE put his hands on the wheel and his feet on the rudder pedals with rather gingerly care, as if he felt clumsy and awkward. And I guess he did feel that way, for he was unaccustomed to sitting far out in the nose of a plane, with the wings and engines behind him—sitting there with glass all around him and metal over his head. He wasn't at home, you could see, flying a wheel-control instead of a stick; he wasn't at ease with the throttles under his right hand instead of his left. There were too many things to do and watch all at once.

So his circle around the field was pretty sloppy. He took a long time to pull the boost back to the cruising limitation of twenty-seven inches, and he never did get the props perfectly synchronized. Fond as I was of him, I had to admit that he flew this crate very badly. Coming in for a landing, he forgot to shift his gas valve to the left main tank, as he was supposed to do, and he left the props in high pitch, and the first time, he would have landed with the wheels up, if the blatting horn hadn't reminded him when he pulled the throttles all the way back. In successive landings, all of them rough and erratic, he overshot or he undershot, he came in too high or too low, he kept his glide much too fast or a little too slow.

And the thing that disheartened me most was that he was really trying, now. Whatever fear he might have had of Durst was not bothering him, I thought; yet tension and nervousness made perspiration roll out over his face. It was a shame, I found myself thinking, that he hadn't done as the other pilots had done—built up his experience on big ships slowly, beginning years ago on the overgrown biplanes that first went on the passenger lines, instead of waiting and having to make such a vast adjustment all at one leap. It was a shame, and a tragedy. Because even I could see that he wasn't going to be able to do it.

We got up to the ramp, and both of us sat there after the engines had died, hearing the slowly deepening shrill of the

gyros in the turn indicator and other gyroscopic instruments as they gradually stopped.

I didn't know exactly what to say, because I didn't want to hurt Bill's feelings; I didn't want to harass him.

He said: "That was pretty lousy."

"It wasn't too good."

"I'd hoped that with you, maybe I'd do better."

"Let's talk this out, Bill. What's the matter?"

"I guess I'm scared."

"Of Durst? You don't need to worry about Durst." I reached over and put my hand on his shoulder. "Bill, I know all about Kelly Field. No matter what Durst would like to do, he'll be fair. He let me ride with you, didn't he?"

Bill nodded, but his voice sounded desperate. "It's the pressure he's got on me!" he burst out. "I try too hard—I try to think of everything in the cockpit, try to see everything at once—and there's none of my brain left for flying the crate."

I said, as sympathetically as I could, and trying to sound confident: "You'll get it all right. Just don't let it worry you."

"Don't let it worry me!" he exclaimed wildly. "Yeah! And me with a wife and three kids!" He gave me a peculiar look, with his lips pressed tight together and his eyes kind of crimped down. His throat was working, as if he was trying to swallow and couldn't. All of a sudden he began to pound his fist on the control-wheel, and his voice sounded tired and overwrought and somehow tragic. "I've got to get it, Perry! I've got to—got to!"

"Sure," I said. "We'll try it again when you get back from your run."

AFTER he had gone to his car, I went upstairs to see Durst. Because, you see, I felt Bill would never get it, and I wanted to talk to Hungry and see if there wasn't some way we could fix it for Bill to do some kind of special work, and so keep a job. I knew if he lost out entirely it would break his heart.

Hungry listened without saying a word. His face didn't change, and I couldn't tell what he was thinking.

"What do you suggest?" he asked when I finished.

So I told him my idea of Bill having another job. He shook his head. "A pilot as old as Bill Thorne never fits in a smaller job," he said. "I've seen it

tried. Some men might possibly do it, but Bill isn't the type."

I felt pretty desperate. "What are you going to recommend, then?" I asked.

He chewed on a hunk of peanut brittle. "What reason have I got to suggest anything?" His face just then was as bleak and cold as an ice floe. "I'll recommend nothing, until these new ships go on his run. If he can't get checked out by then—" He shrugged, and stuck his thumb up and made a motion like an umpire calling a base runner out. "I've got to think of the people who trust their lives to this line."

BILL went out that night, riding the little mail ship he loved so much. The next day I moped around the field, not feeling good. The other pilots on that run were ready for the big ships. Bill came in again, and haunted the dispatcher's office. I flew with him whenever I could.

And flying with him, now, I noticed a peculiar thing. Occasionally he seemed to forget the pressure he was under, and when he did, his work was fine. And just about the time I was thinking he had it, at last, he would suddenly go all to pieces for no reason at all that I could see. His single-engine performance was his worst fault.

It went on like that for three solid days, and he began to get a whipped expression. . . . The longer it went on, the more tension he showed. For a while, I had thought it would be only a matter of time until he would be all right, but now I didn't know. The whole thing was a matter of pressure, of haste, I felt; and I racked my brain for something to help him.

I had dinner at his house on the third evening. Nobody said ten words. His wife Mary just sat there and looked at me, or at Bill; and every time I caught her eye, she tried hard to smile. It was awful. Bill was going out on his last night mail run that night, probably the last run he would ever take for the line, and he knew it.

The weather looked bad, and he wanted time to study the map. Mary and I drove to the field with him.

When we got there, we found that Bill's little ship wasn't parked in front of the post office building, as usual; the shiny new crate I had brought from the Coast was standing there, very majestic and splendid in spite of the rain that had just started to fall. Bill got out of the



"But I know I can fly!" the boy exclaimed. "That was an accident—it could have happened to anybody!"

car and squinted around, looking puzzled and worried.

"What is this?" he demanded. "I must not be going out."

I said, "You're going out, all right. I got Hungry to let us take this crate tonight. I thought if we made a trip over the line together, you might catch on better. I didn't tell you before because I thought you might worry."

"Nuts," he said, and started to walk into the weather office.

"There's no harm in trying, dammit!" I said. "I had to do something. Tonight's your last run—your last chance!"

He gave me a ghostly sort of a grin. "Thanks, Perry," he said. "But I'm afraid it's too late."

"When you talk like that," I snapped, "I could bust you wide open."

WE spent some time with the weather map, and the situation didn't look too promising. A Gulf "low" was moving in rapidly from the southwest, bringing low ceilings over Alabama and Georgia and western Tennessee. Already stations in Kentucky were reporting rain, and Louisville had a thousand-foot ceiling. Farther north, Indianapolis was giving twelve hundred feet, and Chicago two thousand; but everywhere the trend was downward. Watching him, I could tell that Bill didn't like it; he wanted his mail ship for weather like this.

But he didn't say anything, and after telling Mary good-by, we went up to the cockpit. I sat down in the co-pilot's seat. Bill checked everything, and looked over

at me and said, "You better check everything, too. I expect, in this weather, I'll have to have you take care of most of the gadgets."

"Forget the gadgets. That's what I'm here for."

So when the mail was loaded, we taxied out and headed into the wind. The ceiling was not over three hundred feet now, and the rain was pelting down on the wings and the roof of the cabin. At the end of the runway, Bill checked everything again, and then gunned the engines.

We roared down the field, and the sense of speed through the dark was a palpable thing as the landing lights stabbed through a horizontal, streaking deluge that drummed back and plastered the windshield. To me, there was a sensation as of plunging headlong into a chasm; and I knew it was much the same to Bill, for he couldn't get more than a distorted glimpse of the ground through that windshield. I could see already that he was flying by instruments.

The wheels came off the ground heavily, the air-speed mounting. Then the ship flashed past the boundary lights and out over trees, into a black night that engulfed us like a photographer's curtain being flung over our heads.

Bill was already sweating. He throttled back, and pulled the props down to their cruising speed. In the clouds,

bumps jostled the wings until he had to fight the controls with his full strength to make the instruments react as they should. The navigation lights glowed sickly red and green a long way off at the ends of the wings, and mist flowed back over the nose, plastering the windshield with water that eddied and swirled off in rivulets. We had gone into the clouds at less than three hundred feet.

I watched the carburetor-heaters and oil temperatures, the head temperatures, mixture-controls and the other instruments that conveyed information about the mechanical functioning of various parts of the plane. And while Bill flew, I made various adjustments with the carburetor-heater and mixture-controls.

W E were probably fifteen miles out when I noticed that the right engine seemed to be getting rough and when I checked the instruments, it was obvious why. The head temperature was up past four hundred and fifty degrees—more than a hundred too high. Something had gone wrong with that engine. I leaned over to Bill and pointed and yelled:

"Right engine's going to quit! Getting rough. Look at that head temperature!"

He said: "Good Lord! What a time for this to happen!" His eyes glued themselves to the flight instruments as he cut back the right engine and gunned the left to stay in the air.

It passed through my mind that we were going to be in big trouble if that engine quit cold, so that we couldn't use a little of its power to get back to the field. Because, while you can fly indefinitely on one engine with planes like that one, it is a very delicate thing to find a field under a three-hundred-foot ceiling on the radio beam, and get down on that field without cracking up. I wasn't much of a weather pilot, for my job was not on the line, and I didn't get much practice. And I knew that Bill would have his hands far too full to be up to par at wriggling in under clouds that practically lay in the trees.

We were twenty miles out now. Bill pulled the right prop pitch control all the way back, to feather the blades as much as he could and cut down head resistance, and then cut the switches. The cockpit sounded strangely quiet, with one engine dead, even after he had shoved the left pitch to 2100 and had opened the throttle to a boost of 34.5.

He yelled, "Hold it a second!" and I took the controls. He snatched his ear-

phones off of the hook over his head, and with one hand planted them at a crazy angle over his ears. He adjusted the beam volume, and began a turn to the left to get on the beam, trying to find his way back to the field. He adjusted his fletners to trim the ship for this change in power, and all the time he was swearing half audibly, cursing the ship and himself and me for our predicament.

Then, all at once, it seemed to come over him that he had this new ship in his hands instead of his old one, and he looked at me and yelled: "Hey—you take this crate in—I can't fly it in weather like this on one engine! I'd crack it up, sure!"

I said: "You're doing all right."

But almost at once, he didn't do all right. He seemed to remember all the fears he'd had before, and he began making the same old mistakes he had made during these last few days. So I took the controls and finished the turn.

And right then, trying to fly that ship on one engine, and listen to the radio beam too, I discovered how much airplane there was here to handle in an emergency. I tried to follow the beam, and every once in a while I found myself not hearing it, because I was concentrating too much on trying to think and to watch Bill. I wandered across it, and back again—and abruptly, I was lost.

Bill sat there, not saying anything. But it must have been pretty plain by that time that we were liable to end up in a pile of junk against a hillside where we'd stay until somebody found us. For nearly thirty minutes I milled around, trying to find myself. I got the off-course signals mixed up and turned east when I should have turned west. I could see that Bill was getting more and more worried. Two or three times he yelled instructions at me, but I was too busy to heed them.

S OON he began squirming and twisting in his seat, and taking an occasional squint down through a window, trying to see something. He yelled: "Perry, what the hell's wrong with you? The field's over there!" And he pointed. I turned, but I couldn't hold the compass course to his satisfaction. He yelled: "Calm down. We'll do all right, if you'll ever get on the beam!" Then: "Good God, hold your course!" He kicked rudder violently to bring the nose back to its point.

He was getting sore, now; and trying to listen to his instructions got me messed

up worse than ever. I don't think he was frightened at all; most men would have been frightened, but he wasn't. He had quit sweating. He was getting madder and madder, like an old hen that can't get one of its chicks to obey. He kept yelling, and finally I yelled back: "Shut up, dammit! You bother me!"

"Bother you!" he stormed. "You've not got enough brains to be bothered!" Then, when I crossed the beam at an angle, he fairly screeched: "Here, you dope, let me have this thing!" He grabbed the controls, swearing horribly. "And you went through the Army!" he bellowed witheringly. "You call yourself a check pilot! You'd better be glad you weren't up here alone!"

"I wouldn't be up here, if I were alone!" I said, but he wasn't listening to me; he was listening to the beam, and yelling some more.

"You kids!" He turned up the instrument lights so he could see the turn-indicator better. "Who taught you to fly?" He listened to the beam for an instant, and made a turn and headed southwest. "That was the dumbest demonstration I ever saw in my life!"

AS he flew, now, he seemed perfectly calm, perfectly sure of himself. He kept on swearing, but I couldn't hear all of it. He didn't look at me again, but held a straight course; and I had never seen such beautiful instrument-flying in my life. Watching him, I could picture what he must have been in the Army, as hard-boiled a guy as ever came out to the line.

We were a long way from being down, however. We were lost. Bill flew for about ten minutes and then cut back in a hundred-and-thirty-five degree turn, working an orientation problem on the beam to make sure where he was. He couldn't afford to let down, with thousand-foot hills all around us, until he was sure. A few seconds later he turned again, back to southwest, and presently swung around and began to descend. He knew where he was; he was on the southwest leg of the beam.

But here was the difficult, dangerous part—getting in. I felt myself wanting to hold my breath, watching the altimeter needles crawl downward over their dials.

We were still not quite under the clouds, when Bill yelled, "Down gear!"

I jumped, and put the gear down. Bill was getting his window open, to be able to see through the rain. The air-speed lagged quickly, with the wheels in landing-position; Bill threw a forty-inch boost into the engine, while the prop howled.

But we were under the clouds, and ahead—close—were the blurred lights of the field. Just then Bill shouted: "Full flaps!"

We whisked over the end of the runway and got on, bouncing a little. Bill rode his brakes, and the shoes squealed, and the ship slugged down to a stop. He unlocked his tail wheel and taxied up to the ramp, still storming.

"The hell with these crates!" He glared at me, and said acidly: "A check pilot—you! Perry, when I get back from this run, I'm going to give you some instrument-flying. If I hadn't been here, you'd have piled this crate into the trees!"

I said: "You can fly, all right, when you forget the gadgets and remember it's just a big airplane. I never saw anybody do it so well—I got lost, and you found yourself by the beam, on your instruments. You got in on one engine—the thing that disqualified you before. I'll tell Hungry Durst you're okay to check out."

"Okay to check out?" he exploded. "You're damn' right I'm okay to check out!" He got up and stalked past me down the long aisle, yelling at mechanics to unload this cargo and put it into his little mail plane. "Right engine quit!" he bellowed. "Give me a ship that'll run!"

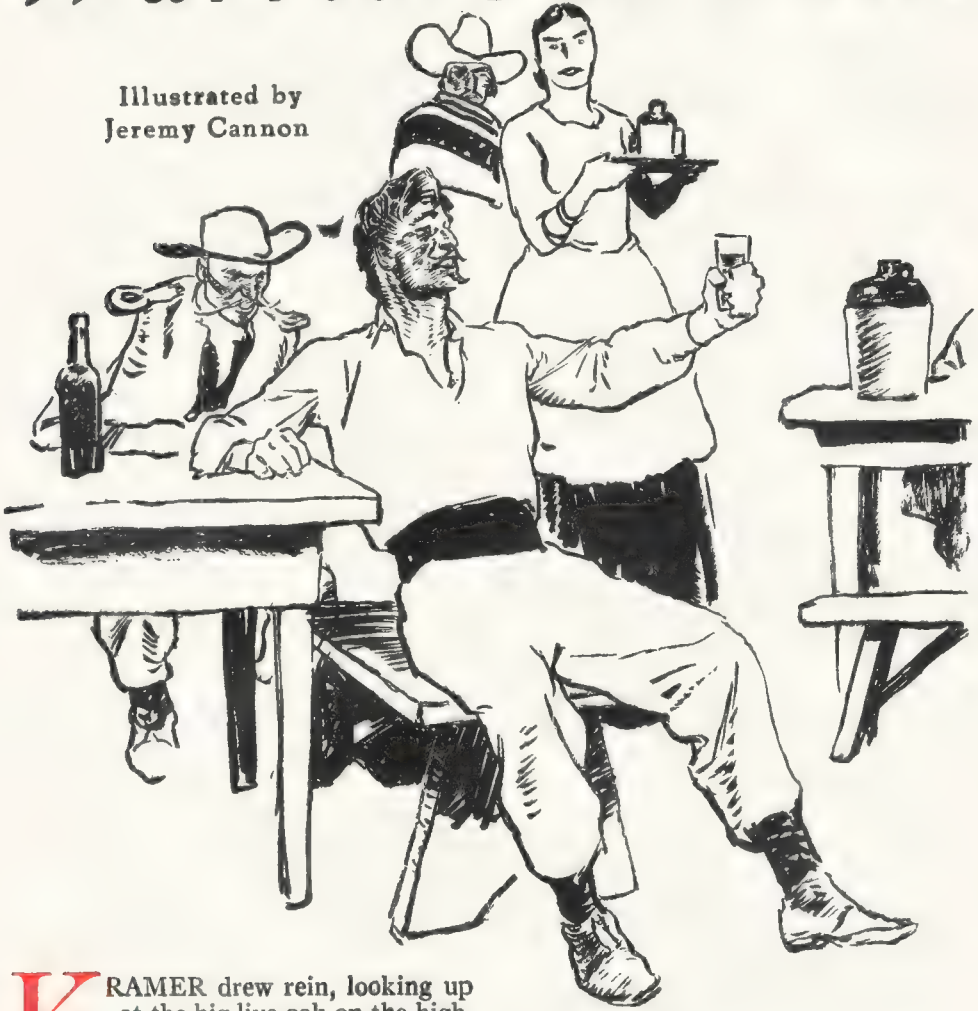
I SAT there, wanting to laugh. It made me feel pretty foolish to have Bill think I couldn't fly weather any better than that; for really, I could. But it was fine to think that Bill had actually done the thing. I sat there, wondering how Hungry Durst would like it, when I made my report that Bill was all right.

And then, when I heard Bill start the engine of his little crate and taxi away, I reached up by the side of the throttle quadrant and pulled back the right mixture-control. From his side of the cockpit, he hadn't seen me push it forward enough so that the engine would heat. He could fly the new crates; but for a while he would need a couple of extra eyes to watch all the gadgets. That was what his co-pilot was for.

Mr. Jamieson will contribute another authentic story of air adventure to an early issue.

Warriors in Exile

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



KRAMER drew rein, looking up at the big live-oak on the higher ground, and the broken iron railing, with the defaced and ruined stone slab. He glanced at his Mexican guide, then at the village some distance away, then at the hobbling figure of an old man who was approaching. The guide spoke.

"That is old Juan, señor. He always comes when one visits the monument."

Kramer dismounted. "Take the horses to the village, enjoy yourself for an hour or two, then return," he said. "I'll go back to Vera Cruz by the night train."

The guide departed, with the horses.

Kramer made his way toward the shade of the live-oak, mopping the perspiration from his face; here in these Tierras Calientes it was always hot. His features were striking, and peculiar.

Slanting forehead, long nose, long narrow chin, almost like a caricature. Not a face to forget by any means. It held strength, and virile savagery.

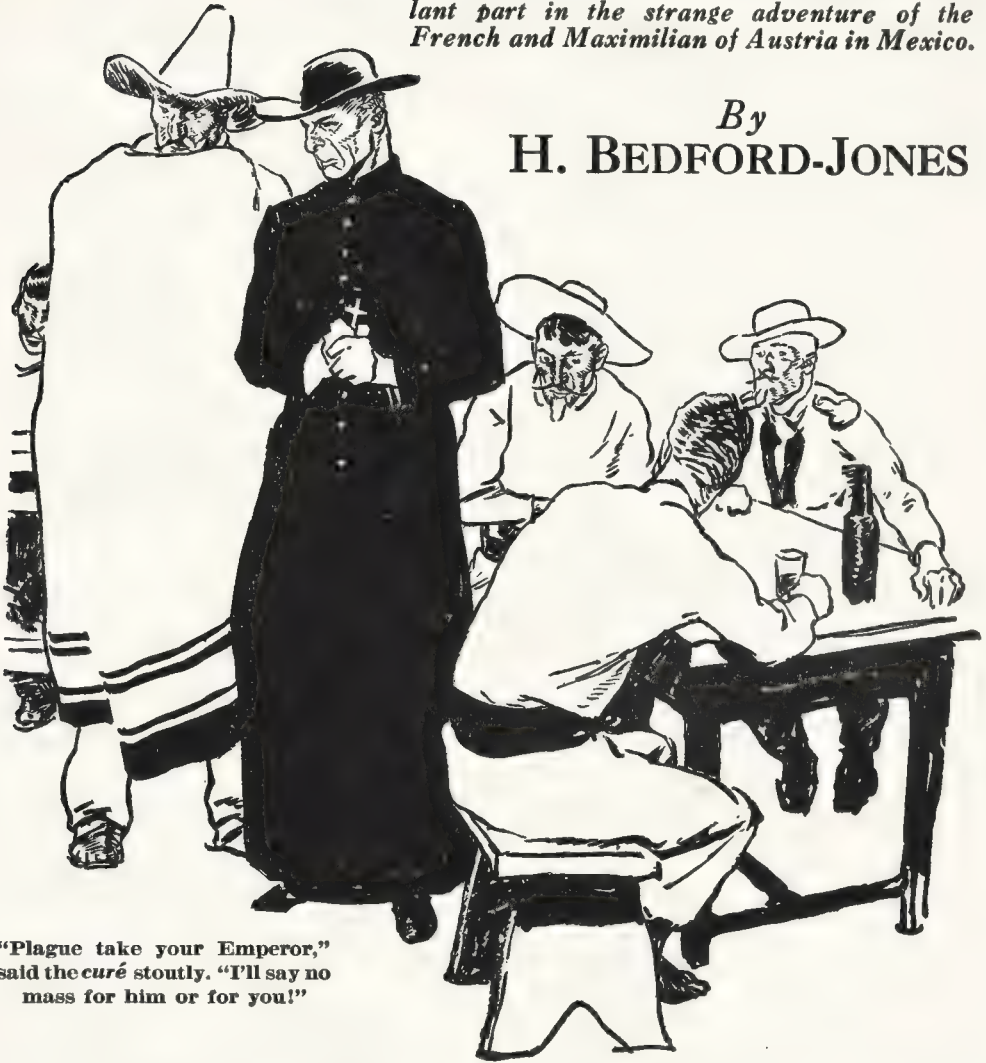
"So this is the spot!" he murmured, halting. This broken and half-ruined stone, surrounded by remains of the iron railing, had once been some sort of monument.

A few words chiseled in the worn stone slab were still legible, but only a few. Here and there, peeping from weeds and cactus, bits of stone showed that a building of some kind had once stood here; the adobes were gone in the rains, no trace of wood remained, and only fragmentary foundations.

Leaning forward, Kramer tried to decipher the words graven on the slab.

"LIFE, NOT COURAGE, LEFT THEM,"
*is a fire-vivid story of the Legion's gal-
lant part in the strange adventure of the
French and Maximilian of Austria in Mexico.*

By
H. BEDFORD-JONES



"Plague take your Emperor,"
said the *curé* stoutly. "I'll say no
mass for him or for you!"

They were French words; odd to find
French words on a stone slab in Mexico!

SOIXANTE. . . ARMEE LES ECRASA. . .
PLUTOT QUE LE COUR. . . ABANDONNA. . .

Kramer turned as the hobbling figure
appeared—an old, incredibly old, bent
man leaning on a stick, a cheap poncho
over one shoulder, little shoe-button
eyes glinting in a brown face that was
one mass of seams and wrinkles.

"So you," said Kramer, "are Juan. I
hear you witnessed what took place here
a long time ago."

Juan came close, peered up at him,
took the cigar he offered, and emitted a
shrill cackle.

"Yes, señor. I was the altar-boy down
in the village, in those days. After the

Emperor came and they said mass that
day, I ran away and stayed with them.
You see, they needed an interpreter. And
they were kind to me, and very gentle.

Kramer's thin lips split in an incred-
ulous smile.

"Legionnaires gentle? That's a new
one."

"It is true. There was little Pepita,
my sister; that night before the high
mass, when they all got drunk and little
Pepita was in the corral among the
horses, two of them fetched her out un-
hurt. Why, señor, they were tender as
women! You know, they were here
often, going back and forth on the Puebla
road, guarding convoys. That was how
our Mexican army knew where to wait
for them and find them."

Kramer sat on a gnarled root of the oak, and old Juan squatted down beside him, puffing at the cigar. Wasps droned about; on the brown lower pasture toward the village, a few scrubby cattle grazed. The hot and listless landscape was much as it had been some seventy years ago. The village church with its high bell-tower was the same, the scattered houses were the same; except that here by the huge old live-oak had stood an ancient hacienda, a stout and massive house with sheds outlying.

DOWN those dusty roads came dusty men, with convoys of mules and wagons; marching troops, who sang as they trudged—alien songs, the marching song of the Legion ringing out from the bare brown hillsides, and the gay lilt of "*Partant pour la Syrie!*" and something about the *bidon*. Gaunt bearded men, hatted with wide sombreros, rifles and bayonets aglint, huge packs towering on their backs; such men as marched a hundred and fifty miles in thirty-two hours—men who accomplished the impossible, men who made a jest of the incredible and put it behind them.

The second company of the first battalion came and went most frequently, back and forth on a portion of the road from Vera Cruz to Puebla, so that their faces were known in the village. On a Saturday night they marched in, and did not march out again; word spread abroad of some great event about to happen, parties of gold-laced officers appeared, more troops came through. That Saturday night the sleepy little village was on edge with the great news. The Emperor himself was coming, the Austrian, the legendary personage whom half Mexico fought and the other half stared at in awe. . . .

Victor, sergeant of the second company, drank deep that night in the village *fonda*. He spoke Spanish fluently and he was a great favorite with the Mexicans, for he ever had a laugh and a song, a cheery greeting, a certain courtesy gratifying to Spanish blood, however abased it might be. The Caballero, they called him, as a compliment.

In the *fonda* that night was the scowling village *curé*, who did not love the French invaders, also many another Mexican. Spies were here, of course; all up and down the land a guerrilla warfare was waged, armies were gathering, outlying parties of soldiers shot down. It was a merciless war, without quarter

asked or given. These Mexicans were fighting for liberty. The French were fighting for an empire.

"Ha, my good priest!" cried Victor jovially. "Yours will be the honor of saying mass for the Emperor tomorrow morning!"

"Plague take your Emperor," said the *curé* stoutly. "I'll say no mass for him or for you, except over your dead bodies." With this retort he strode out, while the French roared with laughter.

Deepest of drinkers, gayest of comrades, was this Victor. His lusty oaths would make the rafters ring. In his lean wiry body was the strength of three men. When all others flagged, he kept going. Captain Junod was wont to say that if he lost Victor, he would lose the whole company. And tonight, crouching wide-eyed in one corner, little Juan the altar-boy watched and listened with all his ears to the swaggering talk and the bellying oaths of these heroes who had fought the Moors overseas.

Arnheim, the big Bavarian who was Victor's chief friend—*corps et chemise*, as the Legion saying went—shook his head sadly over his wine.

"The corps isn't what it used to be," he said, wagging his grizzled blond beard. "Ten years ago it was the Legion; and now what is it? Merely the Regiment Étranger. The Emperor took away our name, gave us carbines instead of rifles, changed our uniforms, sent us to fight for Maximilian of Austria—"

"*Tiens!* Stop your grousing," spoke up another. "Uniforms? We're regular turkey-cocks! I'm going to transfer into the cavalry squadron and get my red pants back."

THERE was a burst of laughter. True, the cavalry squadron kept the red *pantalons*, the *képi*, the saber, but had no epaulets. Jests flew thick and fast. These marching companies were grenadiers, as the red grenades on their collars testified; but they wore white cotton trousers and blue vests, only the officers keeping to the *ténue* of the old Legion left behind in Algeria. And the hats—good Lord! The rafters rocked with laughter.

"Remember the nice little straw hats they served out to us?" cried Victor. "They lasted just one hour, if that long. Ha! These sombreros are the proper thing for this climate. And these carbines do good work. Blue sashes forever—here's to them!"

Upon the toast to the blue cummerbunds of the Legion, broke in a frightened screech. Little Juan echoed it from his corner, as his mother ran in with a torrent of excited Spanish that brought every man to his feet.

"Pepita! Little Pepita! The horses are fighting and she's in the corral—"

Out they poured, half of them not knowing what it was all about. Behind the *fonda* was a corral filled with horses and mules, who had taken to kicking and fighting. And in that hell of flying feet was the child Pepita, a year older than Juan. He ran with the others, and it was he who brought a lantern and held it up.

INTO the corral leaped half a dozen of those wild bearded men, cursing, hitting out, savage as the frightened animals they fought. Out of the *mêlée* they dragged the senseless child, who was not greatly hurt; she and Juan and the mother were hustled into the tavern and surrounded by a crowd.

The rough fingers became gentle, the oaths were stilled, musettes were explored for tidbits; gifts and tokens showered upon all three. Juan found himself on the knee of Victor, who heard his proud boast and regarded him wide-eyed.

"What! An altar-boy? I salute you, comrade!" The bearded face softened, the wild hard eyes became warm and tender. "*Mon petit*, you do well to serve God while men kill one another; stick to it. We're friends, eh?"

"Always!" exclaimed the boy eagerly. "I don't want to see you killed, even if you are French devils. My father's dead. Don't you want me in your company?"

"You! Hm!" Victor turned gravely. "*Hola, Arnheim!* Could we use a recruit or not? We can't take him away from his altar service; that's important."

"We could use an interpreter," said some one seriously. "We can't all chatter this parrot talk like you, Victor."

"That's an idea, *ma foi!*" Victor held up a finger to the boy. "I'll speak to the Captain. After mass tomorrow, before we leave town, hunt me up. Remember!"

Later that evening Victor had his chance, when Captain Junod summoned him.

"The Emperor will be here at eight, or before, sergeant. Mass at eight. Round up that *calotin* of a curé in good time; parade celebration. Decorate the church a bit in the morning. And be sure to



VICTOR

have the drummers and buglers ready for the salute at the elevation of the Host. Do you know when that comes?"

Victor saluted gravely. "I believe, *mon capitaine*, that I know the time. But we have no dress uniforms here—"

"What is good enough for the Legion to fight in, is good enough for the eyes of Emperor Maximilian," said Captain Junod. "Confound these cartridge-boxes! Half the company has leather ones, half use their musettes—there should be some regulation!"

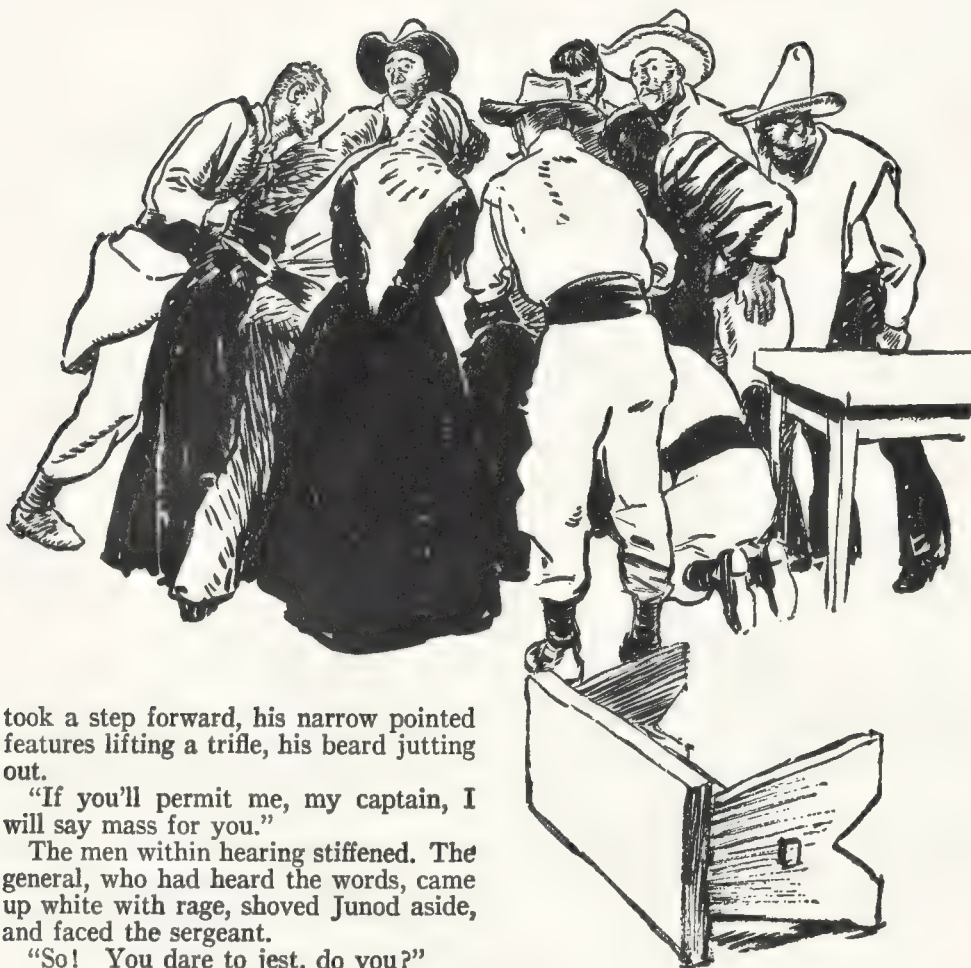
Victor seized his chance. He spoke of the boy. The mother had approved. Juan could be of great use to them, on the road as they were. Captain Junod listened, frowned, and nodded approval.

"I'll see the mother tomorrow. If all's well, we'll use the lad."

MORNING found the church decorated, the guards on hand, the Emperor in his carriage, the staff and generals in their gold lace—and no *curé*. True to his word, rather than say mass for the hated invader, he had taken to the hills. And there was not another priest within twenty miles.

"Your fault, confound you!" Furious, Captain Junod halted before Sergeant Victor, on parade with his company outside the church doors. "Why didn't you make sure of that rascal? His Majesty is waiting—"

General Bazaine was coming over to them impatiently. Victor saluted and



took a step forward, his narrow pointed features lifting a trifle, his beard jutting out.

"If you'll permit me, my captain, I will say mass for you."

The men within hearing stiffened. The general, who had heard the words, came up white with rage, shoved Junod aside, and faced the sergeant.

"So! You dare to jest, do you?"

"No, *mon général*," said Victor calmly. "I was a bishop before I entered the Legion. Under certain circumstances a bishop is always enabled to say mass. It is the business of the Legion to provide the proper person for any emergency, *mon général*. I offer myself."

A gasp ran along the files. Victor a bishop—a bishop! Even Junod stood stock still, gaping; then he turned to Bazaine and saluted briskly.

"Mass will be celebrated, my general. Sergeant! Come with me."

He led Victor into the church. The company of the Legion grinned, exchanged low words—and that ended the matter for them. Being what they were, they did not refer to this matter again. Some among them, perhaps, had been even greater than bishops in their time.

Nor was there any jesting while that mass was intoned. Pop-eyed, little Juan served the altar; in the vestments of the absent *curé*, Sergeant Victor did his duty; and Juan afterward swore that at the benediction—when he should not have

been peeping—he saw tears on the bearded cheeks of more than one Legionnaire. It was something the boy always remembered vividly, as boys do remember some things.

But neither he, nor the men of the Legion, spoke of this matter in future. Juan, proudly numbering himself among these heroes, could share their virtues if not their vices.

IN fact, the boy became the mascot of the company in no time. He wore a miniature uniform, which was made for him by a tailor in the company of fusiliers, so that it had green epaulets instead of the red epaulets of the grenadiers; but he was charmed with this distinction. In his baggy red trousers, his blue tunic and cummerbund, he looked like a little monkey, but he was of extreme service when surly peasants or prisoners had to be interrogated. And he, at least, was faithful to his salt where many of his compatriots turned their



The senseless child was surrounded by a crowd; Juan found himself on the knee of Victor, who asked gravely: "Arnheim! Could we use a recruit?"

backs and fled, or cut a French throat and ran for safety in the hills.

The Legionnaires—in actual fact they were no such thing, being named the Regiment Étranger—were dying in numbers from plague, yellow-jack and sun, but not fast enough to suit the Mexicans. Backed by French arms and power, Maximilian was seizing a throne in this year of 1863; he might hold the cities, but everywhere the stubborn, savage, merciless half-Indian men of Mexico were swooping in guerrilla raids from the hills, cutting communications, smashing outposts. And in the background, Diaz and Terrazas and Nuñez and other Mexican leaders were gathering their forces.

Such things did not worry little Juan; he was a boy, Victor was his great hero, Captain Junod was his demigod, and all the others of the second company were his comrades. He lived with them, for them, among them, and inside a month's time he was chattering French like any one of them.

Victor was bearded, like most of the others, with a big chin-tuft like that of Napoleon III. One day, in lighting his pipe with a firebrand, he set fire to his whiskers and burned them off, amid roars of laughter from the others. So, for a while, he went clean-shaven, and this intensified his strangely jutting features. One day, under the burning sun, with fever strongly upon him, he sat uttering strange words while Juan listened, staring at him with awe and puzzled wonder. A bishop? Yet it was true. And now he was certainly talking Latin such as the *curé* talked at times, for Juan comprehended some of the words.

Again, he spoke tenderly, softly, mentioning a woman's name, a sparkle of tears on his roughened cheeks. Juan's eyes widened. A bishop should have nothing to do with a woman; but then, a bishop should not be a Legionnaire—and an uncommonly rough one at that.

The days drifted on. Up and down the roads tramped these undeniably odd

The *curé*, rather than say mass for the hated invader, had taken to the hills.



figures of men, with their wide hats, short carbines, flopping epaulets, and white cotton *partalons*. Each Sunday and holiday, Juan somehow managed to find himself at home serving the altar, for Victor insisted upon this sternly; the village *curé*, back at his post, scowled and stormed at him, but there was no one else to fill the place.

SO came one glorious week-end when the entire company, sixty strong, laid over in the village, waiting for a Puebla-bound convoy which they would take over. There were no gentry hereabouts, therefore there was no *baile*; but plenty of people came in from the hills on Sunday for the more popular fandango that night. The convoy was in, and here were queer soldiers of all kinds—chiefly *volti-geurs* of the Legion, or what had been the Legion.

Captain Junod had his hands full that night; what with fights, drinking and women, the Legion had its hands full likewise. Furious, Junod consulted with the officers of the escort whom he was to relieve, and induced them to lead their men back toward Vera Cruz at midnight. He regretted it bitterly enough a few hours later.

He got his men up and off with the wagons, at daybreak. Not a soul was

visible in the village. Even the *fonda* was deserted. Victor beckoned Juan.

"Where's Pepita? And your mother?"

The boy shrugged. "Gone. How should I know? We men don't worry where the women have gone."

Victor broke out laughing. A bugle spoke. The column formed up. Breakfast was over; the march lay ahead. Arnheim was adjutant; the Regiment Étranger did not have adjutants who were commissioned officers.

Just outside the village lay a defile, steep and narrow, commanded by slopes thick with cactus and brush. On ahead was rising ground, with the old deserted hacienda of Carillo off to the right. Once it had been a fine house, of stone and adobe, but now it was unroofed and empty.

Juan was perched on a wagon as the column came through the defile. He caught a muttering from the Mexican teamsters; suddenly one of them pulled in his team, leaped clear of the wagon, and was gone like a rabbit into the brush. Another followed him, and another. All along the hillside came flashes and glints of steel. A rifle cracked, and the man next Captain Junod fell with a bullet through his head.

Pistols, old muskets, ancient guns of every kind, opened up in a tremendous fusillade; luckily, it did slight damage, for few of the Mexicans had rifles or carbines. In a flash, Captain Junod saw that this was a raid of the enemy in force, that he was cut off from any return, that his one chance of getting his men through lay in abandoning the wagons. Perhaps the guerrillas would be so eager for plunder that they would let their prey escape. . . . Captain Junod little knew his Mexicans.

The orders went out. Juan jumped down and darted amid the files. Victor caught sight of columns of Mexicans off to the left, closing the road ahead. He shouted at Junod, who peered through the drifting smoke and nodded.

"Forward! Once in the open, form a square. *Forward!*"

Under a scream of lead and slugs, which for the most part went high, the second company deserted the wagons and went on. Junod, with Victor beside him and little Juan pressing close, coolly eyed the road and the ground ahead. That the column was cut off, became more obvious with every moment. Mexican horsemen, a cloud of them, showed on the farther road.

"What is that place yonder?" demanded the captain, pointing.

"The old Hacienda Carillo, *mon capitaine*," piped up Juan excitedly. "The well turned bad or it was bewitched. No one has lived there for a long time."

THE two lieutenants came up. Another man was dead, several were wounded. The three officers conferred shortly; then the bugle sounded.

The square formed up with precision. Ahead, the mass of horsemen was bearing down in a wild and maddened charge. Bullets had ceased to scream now. From their ambuscade, the Mexicans were pouring down to loot the wagons—in passing. Only in passing. These men were after blood, not loot. From right, from left, from the rear, rose the shrill Indian yells, as the enemy closed in.

Quiet, unhurried orders. The carbines went up. Thundering down the road came that mass of cavalry. Victor's voice crackled out; the four sides of the square began to belch smoke and bullets. Juan, peering forth as the smoke lifted a little, saw the front ranks of the cavalry go down, the others pile up on top of them. And the volleys went on, crashing out, smashing the charge on every side.

The bugle shrilled again. Forward! Orders rippled. Juan, white and frightened, heard the screaming men yell and curse, as the files passed the tangle of death that barred the road, and turned to the upper ground. Halt! The cavalry were re-forming, were bearing back for another charge. From the rear, more masses of horsemen were now appearing. The square took shape.

"The hundreds are becoming thousands," said Victor coolly, and passed his water-bottle to Juan. "Here, my son! Give Dindon a drink."

Dindon—they called him turkey-cock because he looked like one, with his scrawny neck. He was down, coughing out blood, two slugs through his chest. Juan knelt beside him and helped him to gulp at the bottle, and saw him die as the volleys began to crash again. A drifting reek of acrid fumes set the boy to coughing. He took a swig from the bottle, and blood smeared his chin—Dindon's blood.

"Ha! That's taught 'em a few things!" yelled Victor. "Juan! Where are you?"

Juan found him and stuck close to him. Captain Junod spoke briefly with the sergeant.

"Hold the house yonder—eh, Victor?"

"*Ma foi!* Thousands, no mistake about that," said Victor. "Yes, *mon capitaine*. The house, by all means. This is no skirmish, but a battle!"

"Take a dozen men, secure the place, do what you can for defense. We'll come more slowly."

The wounded, of course. He knew his business, this Junod. Victor yelled at the men and started out; beside him pattered the boy, whose first terror had passed now into a fever of excitement. Everything was unreal, terrible, magnificent.

"We'll show 'em!" he said. "We'll show the cockroaches, won't we, Victor?"

Victor laughed, the men laughed and ran for the hacienda.

They made it safely. There was a patio surrounded by half-ruined sheds; the building itself was enormous. Muskets banged; powder-smoke spewed forth—the enemy were in part of the huge place. One of the men doubled up and collapsed. Victor set to work barricading the two great doors opening on the patio, closing window openings, pouring lead at the Mexicans in sight. To drive the enemy out of the whole place was impossible.

"Your job, Juan!" In the midst of everything, he paused, his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Collect all the water bottles; take charge of them. Save the water for the wounded."

JUAN bustled about. As the column came in, he collected the canteens and proudly assumed charge of them. Wounded there were, yes, but as yet not out of the fight. A wound had to be mortal before it kept a Legionnaire from handling a carbine.

Now there was a tremendous scattering—loads dumped, men running to walls and windows, knives and bayonets at work hacking loopholes. The Mexicans still occupied a portion of the rambling place; they were in the sheds along the patio, they were coming up by hundreds.

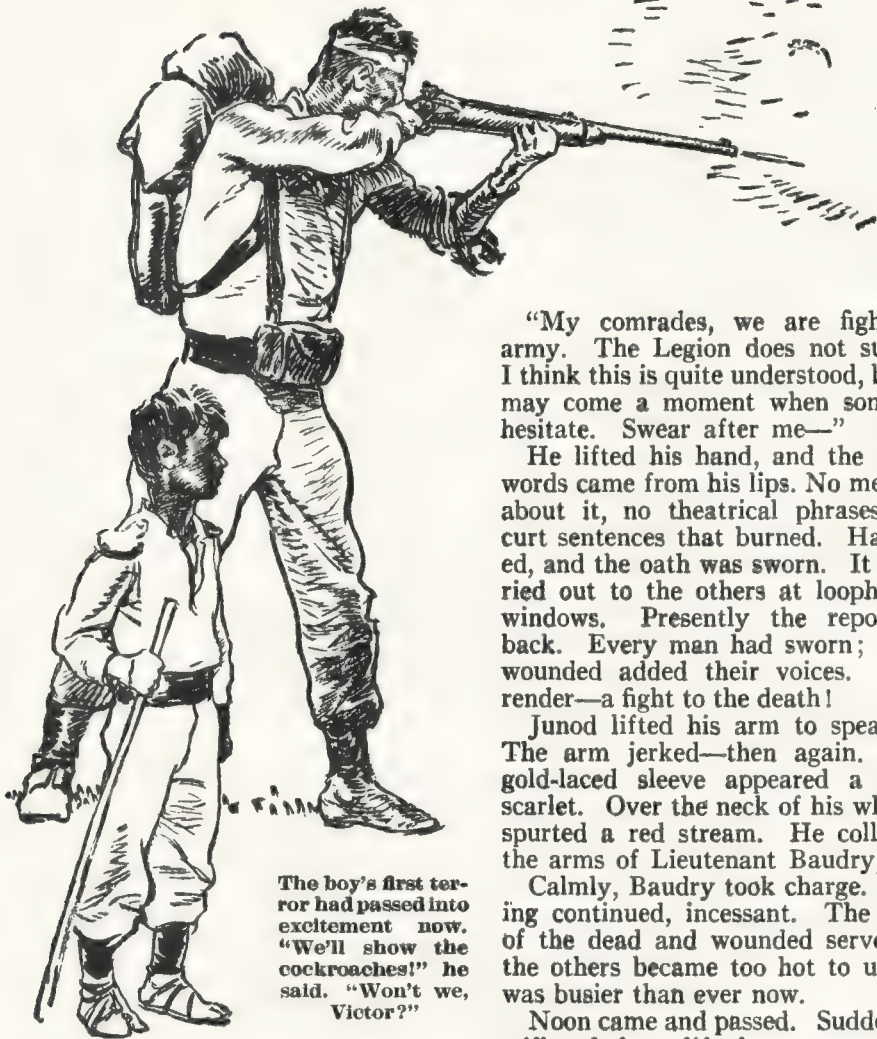
"A white flag!" shouted Victor.

The firing ceased, but not the bustling work. A Mexican officer came into the patio with a white flag. He could speak no French. Juan piped up, translating his command to surrender.

Captain Junod, brushing dust from his tunic, smiled.

"Never."

Just the one word. The Mexican withdrew. From huts, from brush and



trees, from everywhere, began a furious storm of musketry. Bullets ripped through adobe and windows and chinks.

The second company wasted no powder. The wounded reloaded; the others fired from every point of vantage. Junod mounted to the roofless crest of the structure, and after a time came back to the main room of the place. He summoned the adjutant. As Arnheim came, a bullet went through his brain. His body was dragged aside; other bodies were lying here now, Juan was helping the wounded tie up their hurts, and was passing the precious water around. Captain Junod went up to Victor.

"It's worse than we thought," he said coolly. "Thousands of them; we have an entire Mexican army upon us. Summon every man who can be spared."

Word was passed. The men came crowding in. Captain Junod eyed them and his voice lifted in cold precision.

"My comrades, we are fighting an army. The Legion does not surrender. I think this is quite understood, but there may come a moment when some of us hesitate. Swear after me—"

He lifted his hand, and the sonorous words came from his lips. No melodrama about it, no theatrical phrases; short, curt sentences that burned. Hands lifted, and the oath was sworn. It was carried out to the others at loopholes and windows. Presently the report came back. Every man had sworn; even the wounded added their voices. No surrender—a fight to the death!

Junod lifted his arm to speak again. The arm jerked—then again. On his gold-laced sleeve appeared a gush of scarlet. Over the neck of his white shirt spurted a red stream. He collapsed in the arms of Lieutenant Baudry, dead.

Calmly, Baudry took charge. The firing continued, incessant. The carbines of the dead and wounded served, when the others became too hot to use. Juan was busier than ever now.

Noon came and passed. Suddenly men stiffened, faces lifted, movement ceased; clear and high, the sound of bugles, and then the pulsation of drums, sounded. Two of the men scrambled up to the roof-edges. Victor stood awaiting their report. Every man thrilled to it, and Juan stood gaping, listening, eager-eyed. Troops! Another column of the Regiment—

One of the men scrambled down. The other fell headlong with a ball through his head.

"Three new battalions of Mexicans coming up," was the report.

THE heat of the day was terrific. There was no more water. One o'clock, two o'clock; Baudry got a bullet through his heart, and Lieutenant Berg took charge. The floor was littered with dead and dying now.

The men had long since cast aside hats and vests. Shirts followed. Naked to the blue sashes, black with powder, un-

recking of wounds, they fought on. Juan guarded the water jealously for the wounded, his own mouth too parched for speech.

Victor was everywhere, watching everything, and lending a hand to everyone. His gay, eager laugh rose high, though hoarsely.

"Victor!" One of the Bavarians, with a bullet through the body, called feebly. Victor went to him. Blond-bearded, blue-eyed, the dying man looked up at him. "I fear God, comrade; give me absolution."

Victor choked and came to his knees, and hid his face in his hands. After a moment he lifted his head, and the two of them spoke together, and presently the Bavarian died, smiling.

AFTER this, others of the men called Victor to them, or went apart with him for a moment.

Juan, awed, wondering, remembered that he had been a bishop. Always, the men who spoke with him came away smiling, or different; like people who came out of the shrouded confessional, the boy thought.

"Lieutenant! Where's Lieutenant Berg?" yelled some one.

"He's dead," came response. "What's the fuss about?"

"They're firing the sheds, out there."

Fire! Upon the reeking shambles came new heat, new suffocating clouds of smoke. Under cover of the fumes, charge after charge was made; outside, the dead were heaped high, the charges were repulsed, but each charge left a few less men inside. The afternoon was passing. Victor, conscious of a hush, a cessation of the fire outside, took stock.

Fifteen men remained on their feet. And Juan, unhurt. Victor went to him, wiped sweat and blood from his eyes, and grinned at the boy.

"Out of that uniform—no talk!" he croaked. "Here, Charles! Get that gaudy Mexican blanket out of Emile's pack and give it here."

Amazed, but obeying the command, the boy stripped. Victor threw the gaudy native blanket about him, took his hand, led him into a little back room where a pile of boards and refuse was heaped about one window-opening. No firing came from this direction; the window was placed high above the ground here.

"You alone, Juan, have not sworn the oath—"

"But I'll swear it!" cried the boy eagerly. "I will, Victor—"

"You will not! I command you!" snapped the man. "Remain here. I've an important bit of work for you, comrade," and he pressed a folded paper into the boy's hand. "Take this. It'll soon be dark and you can get away. The Mexicans won't hurt you, now that you're not in our uniform. Give this paper to one of our officers, some day."

"I will, Victor. What does it say?"

"That the second company was composed of good soldiers."

"Yes, Victor. . . . Won't you give me your blessing, please?"

The rough, harsh man with the queerly pointed features leaned down and kissed the boy, and made the sign of the cross above him—then abruptly shoved him out of sight under the debris and was gone.

A lull, in the sunset. The voice of a Mexican officer rose clearly to the few grim men who waited here. His harangue needed no interpreter; they caught enough of the words to understand it. Victor went from man to man. Outside, the sheds had burned down, revealing blackened pits beneath one and another.

A burst of yells went up. A man at a loophole turned.

"Here they come, Victor!"

YES, they came—came with a rush. The carbines banged out, pitifully few. From the rear of the house, the barricades were burst down. Mexicans flooded in. The doors were burst down, bayonets flashed, knives glittered, swarthy Indian faces were alight with slaughter.

Through the hell of it stormed Victor. Somehow, he was outside, five men after him; the rest were dead now. The six broke through the whole mass of men outside and gained one of the fire-blackened pits, recessed in the hillside. Bayonets fixed, they remained there. Moments passed. Attack after attack rolled upon them, but they were protected from the rear and the flanks. One man fell. Another pitched forward. Victor stood in the forefront. He was alone now, streaming with blood.

The Mexicans drew away. He dragged himself out and faced them, shook his fist at them—his carbine was broken.

There was a spattering explosion, and the bullets lifted him, and he dropped back among his men.

Then the sun was gone, and darkness came down, and the boy Juan wormed his way out of shelter. Hundreds of men lay dead here; the odor of blood was sickening. As he got away into the scrub, a flickering light arose. Looking back, Juan saw that the hacienda was fired and was blazing high. . . .

The voices died. The croaking tones of old Juan, recalling the days of his boyhood, drifted and died into silence.

Kramer looked out. Something was stirring far down the road; the plodding figures of a man and two horses. His guide, returning for him.

"So this is the spot!" he murmured.

"This is the place, señor," said old Juan, and pointed to a huge burst of cactus a little distance away. "The cactus, there, comes out of the old pit. That is where my comrade Victor died. It is hard to tell, now, where the hacienda stood."

"But you remember."

"I remember, señor," mumbled old Juan. "He gave me his blessing, and he was a bishop. It is something I do not understand, señor. For he spoke of a woman and of a child, I think; it was when he had fever, one day. Yet a bishop does not have anything to do with women. It is indeed very strange, very strange."

"That man—you called him Victor?"

Kramer lifted his head and looked at the broken old stone slab with its writing. "He had another name."

"Perhaps he had, señor; most of us in the Legion had another name," said old Juan. "Yes, you look like him. You have his face. I could almost imagine, as I told you about it, that you were the comrade whom I loved. He was not your father?"

"My father's father," said Kramer softly, and rose. "That is why I came here today, Juan. I have been a long time coming."

He went over to the slab and looked down at it.

The sun had changed. Now its slanting rays brought out the old carving in the stone, made shadows where there had been nothing, brought to light the broken letters. And Kramer, looking at them, could make out one sentence of this slab that had been laid above the Second Company:

LIFE, NOT COURAGE, LEFT THEM.

Next month comes a brilliant story of the Foreign Legion's little-known but desperate campaign in Italy.



Shades of

The author of "The Pirate's Beard" and "The Devil Came to Our Valley" is at his best in this lively story of a wild, wild newspaper man.

HE came in galloping on a falsehood like a beggar on horseback. Now that I look back at it, I can see that he wasn't even plausible; but his very name and his manner, and his deep booming *basso-profundo* had a convincing power. What he said and did would have embarrassed Ananias himself; but he wasn't a mean liar—not the kind who would lie to get out of a jam or to get somebody else into one. The trouble was all in his transcendental mind. He lived in a special world created by his own imagination, where nothing ever happened that wasn't simply tremendous. Everything that occurred in that world was so dramatic that the everyday incidents we ordinary humans called "news" were just boy-scout stuff to him. He didn't have any time for the humdrum of life. What he wanted was color and more color, and then the spotlight turned on.

Long, lean and largiloquent he was, and his name was J. Melville Faslett. He swished into the city-room that day, flourishing a black stick, wearing yellow



Ananias

By FULTON
GRANT

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

gloves and a monocle, and swirling a threadbare coat around him like a cavalier's cape. In fact, those long, pointed lips and that high-bridged nose of his made him look like something out of a book—a sort of reincarnation of *D'Artagnan*, possibly.

We ought to have guessed what a liar he was even then, but we didn't. Even Murray Webster didn't guess, and he was managing editor and a hard-boiled guy and ought to have known better. I was sitting in the slot at the time, and Webster had come in to look over the make-up forms.

What happened was that Nellie Brace brought in a note for Webster. Nellie is that little blonde who sits at the telephone-desk outside the editorial office. Her job is to warn off the charity-workers, uplifters, lobbyists, friends-of-the-governor, and newspaper men looking for jobs. Nellie's a smart youngster in spite of her baby face, and generally nobody gets by her without an appointment. But this Fawcett was different. He must have pulled out one of his vest-

pocket melodramas on Nellie when he wrote that note, because she came in white and scared. It was just a pencil scrawl on the back of a desk-pass, and she handed it to Murray, saying in a queer voice:

"Maybe you'd—better—see this chap, Mr. Webster."

The note read:

I don't particularly want to make any trouble, Webster, and you can save an unpleasant situation by seeing me right away.

Now, our managing editor never had a reputation for patience and an equable temper.

When Governor Robert Millington Fell bought the *Ledger*, he had put Murray Webster in to run it because he wanted a fighter, and that's just what he got. Murray had done a job of reporting from the Front during the war that got him all kinds of decorations for bravery under fire, and I don't think he had any idea what fear is. This note looked like an attempt at blackmail, which was like waving a red flag at a bull. When I saw my chief getting bulgy under the jowls, I knew there was going to be some action. We used to get a few blackmailers and writers of threatening letters now and then in those days, because the *Ledger* printed things that hurt a lot of political feelings, and this looked like one of those.

"Send that dirty so-and-so right in. And leave—that—door—wide open!" said Webster.

I waited expectantly for the fun.

BUT when that queer long drink of lithia-water came in, things changed—just changed, that's all. That bird's personality simply wrapped us up. And somehow you don't lay violent hands on the ghost of the *Chevalier d'Artagnan*.

"Well, well, well!" boomed that voice. It was about two centuries wide and three deep, and we felt that our ancestors could hear it distinctly. "So you are Murray Webster—the Murray Webster! Now, this is remarkable! Fancy meeting you here at last after I have been just missing you all over the world for years!"

Steam was coming out of Webster's mouth, but that voice never gave him a chance. The man swept over and grabbed my chief's hand and started pumping it.

"Just imagine, now!" he rumbled. "I was covering the Argonne push for Reu-

ter's back in 1918 while you were there for the U.P. You were in Bar-le-Duc while I was in St. Michaud. I got transferred over to your bunch the day after that trench-bomb tumbled onto your dugout. Too bad about Remsen of the *Times*, eh? War, the grim reaper! And after the Armistice they packed me off to Geneva while you were with Wilson in Paris. Damned good stuff you were sending through, Webster. I liked your work. And then Constantinople! Why, you scooped me on that Mosul oil story Reuter's fired me for that miss, too; not that I hold a grudge, naturally."

Webster's mouth opened and closed all this time like a fish making air-bubbles at you in the aquarium; and now he managed to rasp out.

"Say, just who in hell are you? What's the idea of this note? If you're trying to—"

"Oh, that!" rumbled *D'Artagnan's* spook, with a deprecating flip of his hand. "Think nothing of it. It's what you might call a gag. I heard you were hard to see, so I tried a sure-fire way of getting past your little blonde. Not too bad, either, what? Clever, if I do say so myself."

Webster was completely shunted. He just sagged while the voice went on rumbling:

"My name's Faslett—J. Melville Faslett. Naturally, you know my work. Now, what I want is a job, Webster. I'm broke, to put it bluntly. Laid off for a couple of years to do a spot of serious writing. Need a job now, so I came along. Heard the Governor had put you in here. Always wanted to know you, Webster—always admired your work. Glad of the chance to work with you."

IT was funny to see the glare fade out of Murray Webster's eyes. Flattery is a queer thing—it affects people you'd never suspect. As a matter of fact, Webster had never heard of this bird in his life. Still, you can't know everybody, even in the newspaper business.

"I'll take anything at all," Faslett was saying. "Rewrite—sports—ships—anything. Naturally, I'd rather work outside. Know Stane City like a book—lived here for a while, you see. Now suppose I start—"

And he got his job.

Oh, sure, he got his job. It just happened that we needed a man since Alf Mooney had sold out to the *Journal* and

the Replocratic Party; and the way this Faslett painted up his experience made him just about perfect for us. Maybe he did look like a Seventeenth Century cavalier; but anybody who could pull a gag like that to get in ought to have brass enough to be a good reporter. Or so we thought.

Faslett started out with a splash. He was a natural-born leg-man. He seemed to be a magnet for news. Fires waited until he was on the spot before breaking out. Crooks wouldn't crook unless he was right next door. It's true that he interviewed Fritz Kreisler and then called him "the great *pianist*" in his story; and that when he did a blurb about Pola Negri, he had her married to the wrong prince; but we just put those slips down to the fact that he had been out of the game for a while.

THE first inkling of what Faslett really was came about a month later. We had got a vague tip that there was going to be a big railroad merger—no facts, no names, just a tip. I sent Faslett out to dig up the story. He came in late with a yarn that was a wow. It was one of the prettiest pieces of economic exposition ever written for a paper—clear, bristling with facts and figures, but dramatic and interesting. According to his story it was the Silverplate road that was going to merge with the D. X. H. & M., and the effect would be to swing more freight at lower rates through our State, giving our farmers their first chance in ten years to make a decent living.

But—

The "but" is that I have been city editor for too many years ever to miss checking an important story. I phoned over to the Commerce Commission and read them Faslett's copy. What they had to say about it was just wonderful. He had merged the wrong railroads! His figures were six years old—not only that, but there wasn't going to be any merger anyhow, because the Commission had vetoed a proposed merger between *two other roads* on the ground that it would impair the service of the State canal, an investment of seventy million dollars.

Aside from these trifles, Faslett's story was just perfect.

I raised hell. It was plain to me that he had gone over to the library and had dug up some old figures, then had written the rest out of his luminous imagina-

tion without even talking to representatives of the roads at all.

"I'm letting you get by with this one slip, Faslett," I told him. "But one more break like this, and you're fired. Get it?"

I'm no martinet. I've pulled a couple of fast ones myself on stories—every newspaper man has. Maybe you've got tight and have to cover up, or maybe you have a date with a girl and you fake your story to get away. It happens. I was trying to be decent, because Faslett must be a little rusty still—or so I thought.

But did the man cringe? Did he look downcast and sorry?

He did not. He just stood there, looking at me with pity, and saying in that righteously indignant basso:

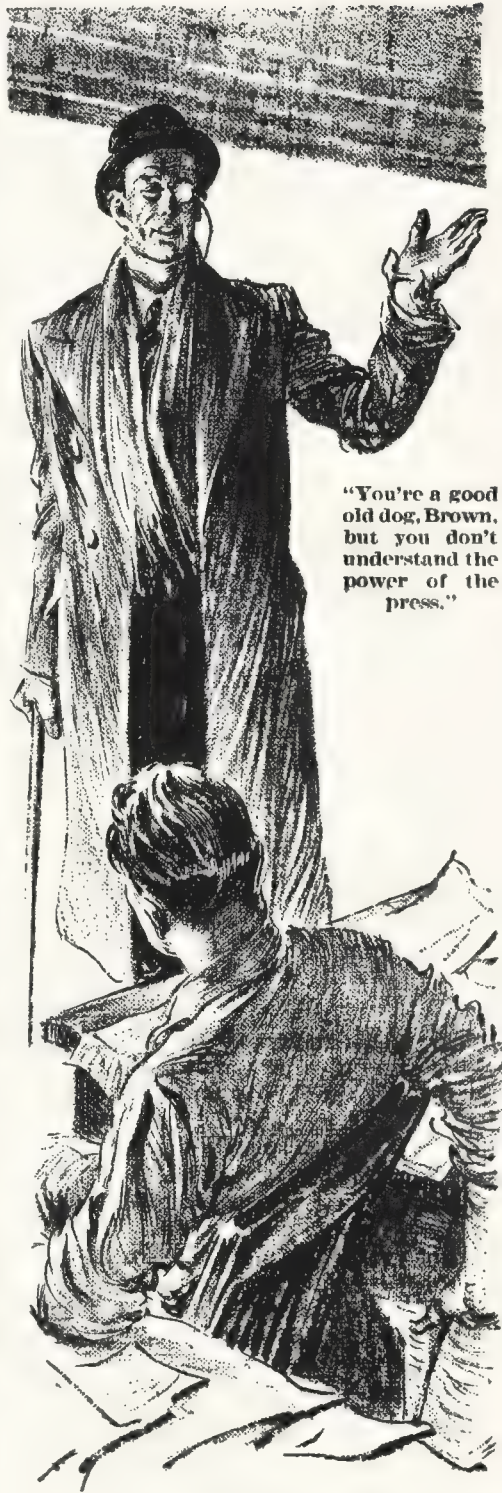
"Too literal, my dear fellow! You're too literal. You'll never make the perfect city editor. Now, that merger, as I have described it, was a thing this State needed. Our farmers need it. The roads themselves need it. If the Commission vetoed it, it is because they've been lobbied into it by the selfish group who are profiting from the canal. What I wrote is a masterpiece of propaganda. Publish that story, Brown, and we'll force that merger. The public will demand it—will clamor for it. You ask for facts? We can make our own facts. You're a good old dog, Brown, but you don't understand the power of the press."

And with that epic he strolled out, leaving me practically black in the face. The only reason I didn't fire him then and there was because I couldn't. Murray Webster does the hiring and firing on the *Ledger*, and he was out. And after I cooled down a bit, the whole incident seemed so absurd that my sense of humor got the best of me.

But Faslett's next break was different.

You remember that bad strike we had in Stane City, when about fifty thousand workers started on a sit-down racket, and then got out of hand when they heard that the mills were hiring strike-breakers. It got to be a bloody mess and the Governor was going to call out the militia, only a fantastic thing happened, and he issued that proclamation instead.

Well, J. Melville Faslett had violent opinions regarding strikes and strikers. For a man who wore seedy clothes and hadn't a nickel to his name outside of his forty dollars a week from the *Ledger*, he had decidedly capitalistic convictions.



"You're a good old dog, Brown, but you don't understand the power of the press."

The strike began in the Governor's own plant, and it spread like wildfire. Everybody knows that Governor Fell is a controlling stockholder in a lot of mills in our State; and it didn't take us long to figure out that this strike was a po-



"Come, Brown; I'll get you out of this!" —Sure, it was Faslett.

litical trick—fomented by the Replocratic party in order to put the Governor on the spot in the coming election. A bad strike, they figured, would straddle him both politically and financially—between the workers' votes, which he needed, and the danger to his own pocket-book. Nobody could prove that, but we knew it. And so did the Governor.

WE might have guessed that Faslett would go off the handle, by the way he talked around the office.

"By the Lord," he would say, "it's indecent! It's criminal. These damned unions have no right to make a whole community suffer because they want to force the mill-owners to pay them more money. If I had my way, I'd toss them all out. What we need is a dictator—somebody strong enough to teach them a lesson."

We just laughed. We didn't pay much attention to that.

But the sit-down got to be something else. More than half the workers in the town were walking out, and there were big demonstrations in the public square—bonfires, speeches by soap-box orators, Communist parades, singing of the Internationale and all the tricks that go with organized strikes in the modern manner. A cordon of cops was thrown around the Square, but there was no open disorder—yet. Every day there were meetings between the union leaders and the mill-owners, and daily the ill feeling was growing stronger. The Replocrats were getting just what they wanted. The solution and mediation of the strike was being put squarely up to the Governor.

And the Governor acted.

There was going to be a special session of the committee called for the settlement of the strike, it was announced. The labor leaders were to be there in a body—and the owners' representatives

also. And the Governor himself was to address the body with a conciliatory speech.

I sent Faslett out to cover that story. There wasn't, I felt, much chance for him to go wrong, because the Governor invariably hands the press printed copies of his speeches before he makes them—mimeographed copies, generally, in neatly bound folders. All Faslett had to do was to pick up the speech and come in with it, then write his story around it.

I didn't know Faslett.

He got that speech, all right, and it was a typical masterpiece of the sort that Robert Millington Fell is able to write and deliver. I told Faslett to go ahead and write his story. I didn't bother to check it, feeling he couldn't make any errors. The copy-readers are supposed to correct and cut down and make headlines for the stuff written in the office, but they never change any outside copy or quoted material like a speech.

Well, I went home early that night, and I didn't see the edition when it came out. In the morning I saw it—the big black headlines on the front page.

GOVERNOR IMPLIES THREAT TO STRIKERS!

That was the way it read. And it went on with the story of the meeting, quoting the Governor literally with a statement which, I knew perfectly well, was nothing short of dynamite.

It was a beautiful speech! He pointed out that the whole industry was just emerging from an economic crisis, and he chided the workers and their "misguided leaders" for taking advantage of the weakened condition of the industry. He pointed out that there was no justifiable reason why workers in one industry should be paid on a higher relative scale than any other workers—or on a lower scale, either. He urged the bickering parties to compromise, that the owners grant the union claim for collective bargaining, that they reconsider the wage-increase demand with an eye to granting part of it. And then he added:

"It is conceivable that the owners should employ outside labor to handle a strike."

That threw me. The Governor is not precisely a labor man; yet he has always been antagonistic to strike-breaking. I couldn't believe that sentence. Something was wrong.

And when I examined the pasted-up sheets Faslett had written his story on,

—clipping and pasting down quotations from the Governor's speech,—I found out where the hiatus was. Somebody—and it could only have been Faslett—had X-ed out the word "not" between "is" and "conceivable!"

When Faslett came in, Murray Webster called him to his own office.

"Listen, you blankety-blank so-and-so of a faking liar! You have not only put this paper in a spot that may cost us all our jobs, but you've practically overthrown the Governor and his entire party in the next election, and you've poured gas on that smoldering strike until there'll be bloodshed tonight. Damn your lying soul, you get out of here before I lose my temper and toss you out of the window. Get out! I don't care if you've worked on every newspaper in the world, you can't work on this one. Get out!"

Faslett tried the same line with Webster he had pulled on me. The line was the same, but the result was different.

"My dear fellow," he said, "it is quite true that I altered a word in that speech, but your shortsighted attitude is pitiful. Now if you think a little more deeply into this, you'll realize—"

That's as far as he got. The next instant Murray Webster was kicking him down the wooden stairs into the advertising department, stick, coat, monocle and all; and if he hadn't scrambled together and run, I think Murray would have killed him.

But it wasn't the end of Faslett.

Not Faslett.

THERE was hell to pay in our town that afternoon. There is something about humans that seems to make them sometimes *prefer* to believe the worst rather than the best. All the other papers—the *Journal* and the *Press Tribune*—carried the Governor's *real* speech, unadulterated and unaltered by the warped mind of a J. Melville Faslett. But the *Ledger* was the Governor's own paper; and when the workers saw that headline and read that story, they just went crazy. They broke loose. They started rioting of a kind that meant blood and death and destruction of property—a miniature revolution, right in the State capital. Strike-breakers! You can't even whisper those words to a group of strikers; and our paper had done more than whisper.

Hell to pay, and the public square was the scene of a fighting, howling mob.

When my trick in the slot was over, I went out there to dig up a new angle on the story. I expected to be fired from the *Ledger*—we all expected to be fired because of that fool gag of Faslett's, because the Governor was about as furious as one man can get, and we couldn't blame him. It didn't do much good to deny the story in the next edition—call it a misprint, a typographical error. The copy-reader had naturally written his headlines around the high-spot in the story, and Faslett had made his own high-spot. I might be fired, but I intended to grab one good human-interest story before the ax fell. So I went out into the square, right into the midst of the row.

MAYBE you've never seen a mob in action—have never seen humans being stripped bare of their souls, going primitive, losing their civilized reason, caught up in a mass-hysteria that turns each atom of a crowd into a devil incarnate, sweeping them all up into a maelstrom of wrath and ego and desire, violent, brutish, sensual and carnal and bloody-minded—all because of some idea that somebody has inoculated them with—and which they probably don't even understand.

The din was awful. Gangs were shouting the Internationale. Other gangs were heaving Irish confetti at the squads of cops, who were just doing their best—which wasn't much. Across the square a mob with crowbars, axes, picks, blow-torches and just bare hands was trying to tear down the huge stone building of the mills. Great cloth banners, crudely painted, were strung across telephone poles, while other placards were dotting the press of the throng. I wondered if Faslett had begun to see what his job had accomplished now.

I saw a man crawling up a drain-pipe of the building with a red flag in his teeth and a torch in his hand, and I knew right then that serious trouble was starting up there. I had brought my "minny" camera with me—a habit of mine; and I took a shot of the man. That might have been morbid, but it was the kind of stuff I wanted.

In the center of the square somebody was standing on a pile of boxes, hoarsely yelling at the mob and waving his hands. I wanted some of that for my story, so I started to move that way.

Just then about fifty cops made a charge. Cops don't much care who they

hit when they start fighting, and those cops caught up with me about halfway to the orator, and one of them clouted me across the head with a club. I went down, and the next thing I knew I was a doormat for hundreds of feet, fighting actually for my life. Somehow I managed to get up. I was hurt, too, but most of all I was mad. This wasn't my fight. I wasn't wholly in sympathy with the strikers, but I wasn't caring, then. The cops were charging the mob, and the mob was fighting back, and I was being the jam in a human sandwich—or maybe the poor cheese.

A big bruiser with his shirt half-ripped off and bloody all over took a swing at a cop, missed him, and connected with my head. I didn't go down, but I saw red.

Like a fool I charged right into the mob, trying to hit that bird. Things aren't very clear after that, but I have the impression that all the cops clouted me again, altogether. I was down again, and people were stepping on my face and hands.

And then somebody was trying to lift me up, and an all-too-familiar voice was saying, close to me:

"Come along, Brown. This is bad. Come with me, fellow; I'll get you out of this."

Sure, it was Faslett. The bad penny always turns up!



He still had his long coat—rather torn just then, and his black stick and his monocle and his cavalier manner. Somebody had bashed in his hat, and there was blood on his face; but he was pushing through that milling mob, and I followed him.

I can barely remember the chatter he was spouting over his shoulder as we went toward that soap-box orator, but it went something like this:

"Glad you're here to witness this, Brown. I see my mistake now. And I see how to repair it. This will be a great story, Brown. You're lucky. You can bring the story in while I handle the reporters from the other papers. This trouble will be over in a short time now."

I tried to yell at him—tried to ask him what he was babbling about; but I never got the words out. The next thing I knew, we were at the pile of boxes, and Faslett had climbed up behind the orator and had cracked him on the head with his stick. The man

dropped like a felled steer and tumbled to the ground. I don't believe anybody else even noticed it.

And Faslett stood up there for a minute, just looking things over like a long, thin Napoleon, or maybe Balboa discovering an ocean. Then he roared. He waved both hands—and stick—and roared, and the boom of his voice carried over the noise of the fighting mob.

"Attention!" he roared. "Attention, you free workers of this city. Listen to me! I bring you a message direct from the Governor!"

I nearly collapsed. But I might just as well have tried to stop the Mississippi as to stop Faslett then.

"You have won your strike, men," he was bellowing. "Go back to your homes. Stop this foolish fighting. Stop this useless bloodshed. Go back to your homes and wives. You have won your strike, beaten the owners. There will be no scabs. The Governor promises that every point of your demands will be granted—even if the money for the



"I have endeavored to do my best, sir," said Faslett. "It is pleasant to learn that you have found it worthy."

wage-increase comes out of his own personal fortune."

"Yeah? Who the hell are you?" somebody yelled; but Faslett was equal to the test. He answered glibly:

"I represent Governor Fell. I am from the Governor's own newspaper, the *Ledger*. I bring you his great message. Go back to your jobs tomorrow. Read the Governor's proclamation in the papers tonight. Go home, and thank God for Robert M. Fell, friend of the workingman."

And they cheered. How they cheered!

"Yea-ea-ea-ea—the Guv'nor! Yea-ea-ea-ea!"

I was practically paralyzed. There was nothing I could do or say to stop him. It was a hoax, a mad, insane hoax; but what could I do? Even if I jumped up there and told them, it would get nowhere—more bloodshed, maybe, or worse. And now I saw the reporters from the *Journal* and the other papers pushing through the crowd. Governor's proclamation! There was a story for them.

And Faslett interviewed them—interviewed them, mind you! Struck poses. Flashed his monocle. Waved his stick. Handed them the most pompous and absurd spiel imaginable.

"Glad you fellows are here," he was saying. "Now if you will go to the Mansion about eight, the Governor will have his proclamation ready. Naturally, you understand that the Governor is making a big personal sacrifice in this—a guarantee of millions—case of public emergency."

I QUIT and ran—pushed through and grabbed a taxi and tore back to the *Ledger*. When I broke the story to Murray Webster, he nearly had a stroke. There wasn't anything to do. The *Journal* would make an "extra" of that story, and we knew it. Would have it on the street in another hour. And there was no use denying it. Not after Faslett had made a public hero out of Governor Fell. Guarantee a wage-increase for fifty thousand men out of his own fortune! It was immense. You can't go back on a thing like that. It would cost the Governor a cool million before the year was out, but he couldn't go back on it. And just how would the Governor of the State explain to the public that he had been tricked—tricked into a magnificent gesture—by a crazy ex-reporter on his newspaper?

Murray Webster would rather have taken cyanide than tell the Governor. But it was better that he get it straight from us than from the press or some outside source. And so Murray telephoned. He wasn't expecting what actually happened.

"What's that?" roared the Chief Executive. "Who—did *what*? Told 'em I'd guarantee—*what*? Say that again."

Murray repeated it. There was no explosion. There was only silence for a minute; and then:

"What's that chap's name? Faslett? I want him here. Yes, right here—get him and send him here to the Mansion. And print that story, Webster. *Print* it, understand. Spread it. Spread it all over the paper. Take credit for it—scoop the others. Smear it all over the front page—and send that man to me."

People, as the flapper used to say, are funnier than anybody else.

WE waited for Faslett, but no Faslett came. Webster asked me to go and pick him up at his boarding-house. I went. It was a dirty, smelly little place, and the landlady told me Faslett had gone to bed.

"And if you're a friend of his, you can tell him that it will be the last time he sleeps in a bed of mine if he doesn't pay me the three weeks he owes. Give him that, from me to him."

Not a pleasant person.

Can you imagine a *D'Artagnan* in nightshirt and cloth slippers, sitting on the edge of an iron bed, reading a torn copy of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*? Don't try—you can't do it. But there he was, looking a little ratty, perhaps—a little sallow and less picturesque, but still a ranting, swashbuckling cavalier.

"One must retire early, Brown, when one uses one's mind as I do. Danger of brain-fag. Now what is it?"

"Get your clothes on. The Governor wants to see you. *Now*, too. So get going."

"Well! I'm glad to see that our chief executive is appreciative of intelligence—"

"Yeah?" I said. "I'll bet he's appreciative. Get going."

We got to the Mansion about nine. The Governor's butler showed us to his private study, and there was quite a crowd already. Murray Webster was there, scowling at Faslett as we came in, and a couple of senators were smoking cigars with the party boss who handled

the Governor's campaigns. The Governor rose to his feet. He didn't smile, didn't exactly frown. He just looked at Faslett piercingly from under his Lloyd-George eyebrows, saying:

"Sit down, Mr. Faslett—and you too, Brown." We did so.

"I suppose you are aware, Mr. Faslett," said the Governor, "that you are liable under several State statutes. Under the law you have committed several serious offenses—libel, falsification, public address without a permit, interfering in a matter of public safety—several, in fact."

Did Faslett cringe and tremble? He did not. He stood up and struck a pose taken from Henry Irving, hand inside his coat over his heart, saying:

"Quite possible, sir—quite possible. But hardly consequential under the stress of circumstances."

The Governor only stared.

"Just what prompted you to do those things, Mr. Faslett?"

"I'm surprised, sir, that you have not seen by their result, the motives which must have urged me to undertake to play a powerful political game. Surprised, sir, indeed."

The Governor stared some more, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

"Which means, precisely?"

"That the proclamation which I—shall I say, 'created' in your behalf, sir, was the only comprehensible solution of a very difficult problem. I believe, sir, that it will guarantee your reelection."

Murray Butler jumped up, at that.

"See, Governor? Just as I told you. You can't do anything with him."

Robert M. Fell smiled, ignoring his managing editor.

"I'm not quite sure, Mr. Faslett, whether you are a clown or a genius; but it is patently true that your—your imaginary proclamation which you thrust upon me—was a true solution to a dangerous situation. I think none of us would have had the courage to have initiated it without your—your help. I feel that in a certain measure, I am your debtor."

LA FONTAINE wrote a fable about the frog who inflated himself until he should equal the cow in size, then burst. I thought Faslett was going to burst. His ego was cracking the shell of his body, and his breathing was difficult for the pride that welled up within him.

His monocle came out of his pocket and was screwed into his eye. His thumbs found his lapels.

"I have endeavored to do my best, sir," said he. "It is pleasant to learn that you have found it worthy."

But the Governor cut in on him.

"I owe you a debt, Mr. Faslett; and I shall attempt to pay it. Now you are, I understand, a man of broad newspaper experience—Europe—war-correspondent—special reporting for Reuter's and other important agencies. A man with your experience might go far. Possibly the desk of political editor on the *Ledger*—"

"Oh, no sir," said Faslett. "Thank you, but—but no."

"Or city editor—if we move Brown along?"

Faslett appeared to consider, then shook his head.

"Not that, sir. . . . Brown is a fine chap—a bit obtuse, but a fine chap."

The Governor's eyes were twinkling.

"Then suppose you name the job, Mr. Faslett."

Was that a flush of color I saw on *D'Artagnan's* neck?

"I think, sir," said Faslett, "that my old position on the staff—a simple reporter—would be adequate, sir. I—"

MURRAY WEBSTER couldn't take it any more.

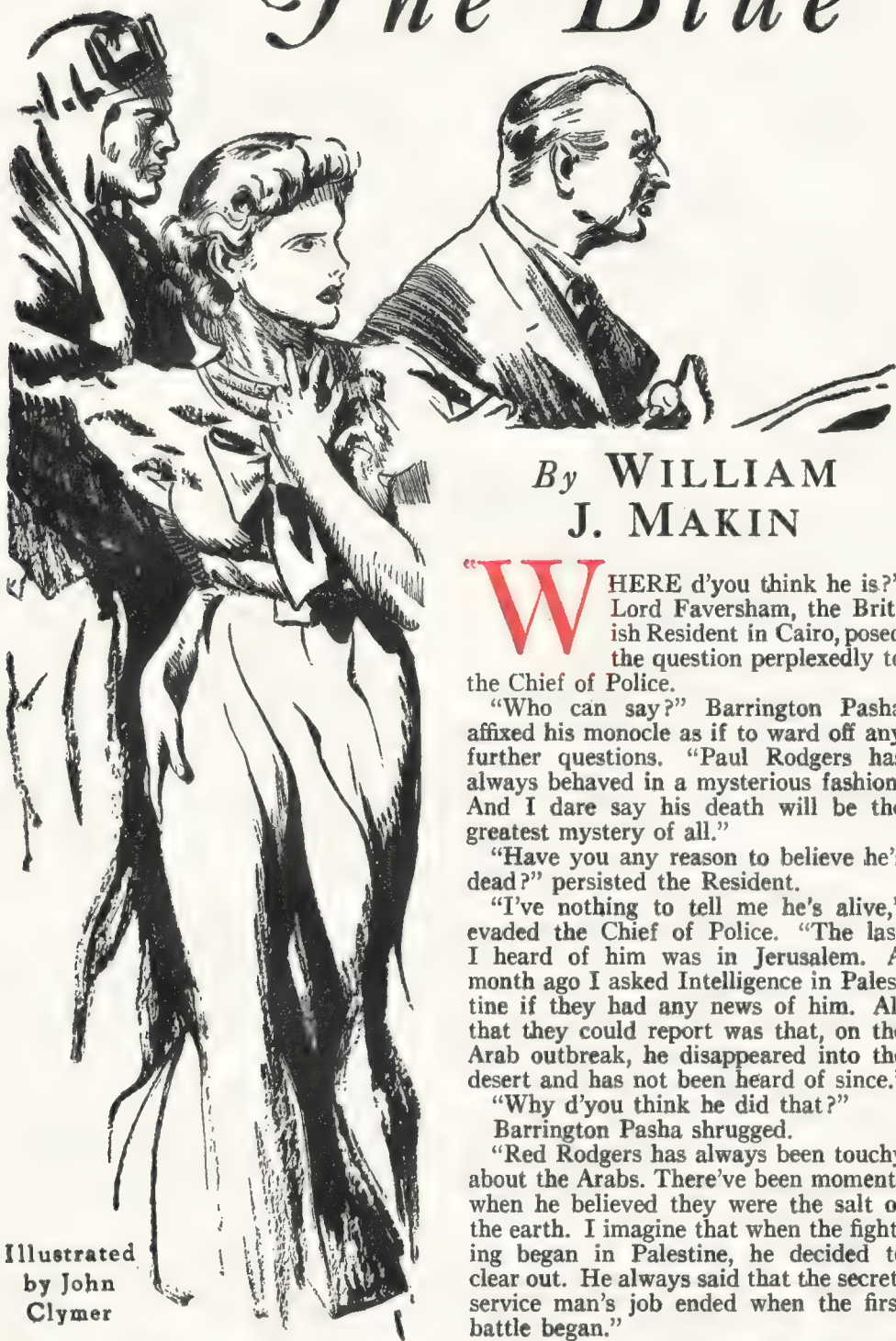
"Listen, Faslett," he yelled. "Tell the truth. Did you ever work on a newspaper before in your life? Didn't you fake all that business about Reuter's and the war? Come clean, now. Tell it straight!"

Faslett turned his head toward the managing editor as an opera star to her manager.

"My dear fellow," he said patronizingly. "But of course! My experience has been limited, as a matter of fact, to a correspondence course in journalism. It was necessary for me to get an opportunity, however. A simple subterfuge, I find, is often convenient—and harmless, oh, quite harmless. Now, with the Governor's kind offer, naturally, things are altered. I shall be glad to reconsider my resignation, made under stress at a moment when—ah—when neither of us was possibly quite himself. Yes, Webster, I shall be glad to resume work. . . . My loyalty to the *Ledger* transcends all personal feeling."

"Oh, God!" said Murray Webster.

The Blue



Illustrated
by John
Clymer

"It may interest you, Wilton, to know that I had arranged for your assassination in Bagdad tomorrow," said General Kastamuni suavely.

By WILLIAM
J. MAKIN

WHERE d'you think he is?" Lord Faversham, the British Resident in Cairo, posed the question perplexedly to the Chief of Police.

"Who can say?" Barrington Pasha affixed his monocle as if to ward off any further questions. "Paul Rodgers has always behaved in a mysterious fashion. And I dare say his death will be the greatest mystery of all."

"Have you any reason to believe he's dead?" persisted the Resident.

"I've nothing to tell me he's alive," evaded the Chief of Police. "The last I heard of him was in Jerusalem. A month ago I asked Intelligence in Palestine if they had any news of him. All that they could report was that, on the Arab outbreak, he disappeared into the desert and has not been heard of since."

"Why d'you think he did that?"

Barrington Pasha shrugged.

"Red Rodgers has always been touchy about the Arabs. There've been moments when he believed they were the salt of the earth. I imagine that when the fighting began in Palestine, he decided to clear out. He always said that the secret-service man's job ended when the first battle began."

"A queer sense of duty," grumbled Lord Faversham.

"He's a queer man," emphasized Barrington Pasha; and for a few minutes,

Oasis



STORM in the desert; storm in the hearts of desperate men . . . and a hazardous adventure of the Anglo-American intelligence officer known as the Red Wolf of Arabia.

in that comfortable office of the Residency in Cairo, an ironic, smiling ghost seemed to hover about the two men. Paul Rodgers, known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia, seemed to have disappeared like a mirage in the desert before the advancing military hosts of Britain.

Yet, of the two men, Barrington Pasha knew him well in the flesh. He recalled the slim, erect figure, the sun-darkened face, the quizzical gray eyes and the inevitable flaming crop of red hair. Red Rodgers could play the Arab to perfection. Barrington Pasha recalled vividly a figure which had swayed before him in his office, a figure in a blue burnous who had been tortured in captivity. And then, after a drink of water, the figure had gone forth to save a king from assassination in the streets of Cairo.

A QUEER fellow, indeed. The British Resident listened open-mouthed to tales of the exploits of the cleverest secret-service man east of Suez.

"Give him a piano, and he's happy," went on the Chief of Police, with memories of those sun-browned fingers conjuring forth exquisite melodies. "He plays stuff that I've never heard in my life before. Music that gives you creeps of the spine. Some day he'll be found dead at a piano. That's how his Arab friends will get him."

"Well, if he's still alive, he's the fellow we need for this business," said the Resident, touching a *dossier* on his desk.

"He usually turns up when he's wanted," sighed Barrington Pasha. "And as we've had no news of him for so long, I fear he must have died—in the desert."

"In the meantime, we've got to deal with—" began the Resident, and then stopped as the door opened, and his private secretary appeared.

"Mr. Michael Wilton, of the Foreign Office," announced the secretary. "Will you see him now, sir?"

"Show him in," nodded the Resident.

He gave a weary smile to the Chief of Police. Barrington Pasha fixed his monocle more firmly, more aggressively.

Both men rose as the door opened again. In this fashion they both showed their respect for Whitehall. At the same time, the figure who entered personified Whitehall: The striped trousers, the morning coat, the wing-collar and the gray tie exhaled the sedate atmosphere of the Locarno Room.

"Good morning," began the Resident.

"Good morning, sir." There was something languid and cold in the voice of the Foreign Office envoy. "I understand that the F.O. have advised you I am to be transported to Bagdad as quickly as possible."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Wilton. A Royal Air Force plane is ready for you at Heliop-

olis airdrome. But I hope to have the pleasure of your dining with me this evening."

"Very good of you, sir," replied Wilton through his straight, bloodless lips. "But if you don't mind, I would like to be on my way as quickly as possible."

"Today?"

"Within an hour or so. . . . My business is urgent, you know."

The Resident nodded.

"I'm fully aware of the object of your mission, Mr. Wilton. I had hoped that a little talk would have made the political scene a little more clear to you. For that reason I invited the Chief of Police, Barrington Pasha, to be present here today. He's a member of the Arab Bureau, an unofficial group which gathers interesting information as to what is happening among the tribes in the desert. I think his reports—"

WILTON, who had been coldly regarding Barrington Pasha, nodded.

"Thank you. I've heard of Barrington Pasha. Of course, we have our own view of the situation in Whitehall. All that concerns us at the F.O. is that the Arabs of Palestine, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq are planning to combine against European domination in the Near East."

"That is the little problem," drawled Lord Faversham.

"And it is my business to get to Bagdad and break up this federation."

"We shall be eternally grateful to the man who can do it," said the Resident.

"Then I do not think there is anything more to discuss," said Wilton calmly. He produced a fountain pen and jotted down a note on a slip of paper. "May I take it that the plane will be ready to leave Heliopolis at two o'clock precisely?"

The Resident glanced at Barrington Pasha, who nodded.

"It can be arranged, Mr. Wilton."

"Thank you. . . . Oh, by the way, please see that there is accommodation in the plane for my wife."

"Your wife!" said the Resident, his eyes widening in astonishment. "Surely, Mr. Wilton, you are not taking a woman with you on this mission?"

"It is our honeymoon," replied the Whitehall man. "And it is only right that she should accompany me. I'm inclined to believe you exaggerate the dangers out here."

The Foreign Office envoy gave the unmistakable impression of a man who

considered the interview at an end. Lord Faversham rose and held out his hand.

"Well, Mr. Wilton, all I can do, apparently, is to wish you a safe journey and the best of luck for your endeavors in Bagdad."

"Thank you, sir. When I return in a week or so, I hope I shall have the pleasure of dining with you?"

"The pleasure will be mine, and the dinner will be waiting," smiled the Resident.

Barrington Pasha held open the door for his caller.

"Would you like me to take you down to Heliopolis?" he asked.

Wilton shook his head. "No need for that. Just telephone the necessary instructions to the pilot."

"I will," nodded Barrington. Then, as an afterthought: "I think I ought to tell you, Mr. Wilton, the name of the extremely clever man who is behind this organization of the tribes of the desert."

"Who is he?"

"A Turkish soldier of fortune. He fought against us in Palestine, recently. Speaks Arabic like a native, and knows all the tricks of desert warfare. His name is Kula Kastamuni."

"Thank you," replied Wilton. "Maybe I shall meet him. Good day, gentlemen." And the door closed softly behind him.

"Well?" said the Resident, breaking the silence that followed his departure.

Barrington Pasha shrugged.

"He's from the Foreign Office, sir. He has assurance and courage."

"Yes, that's very evident," sighed Lord Faversham. "And I'm worried about that woman he's taking with him."

"So am I, sir. D'you think he'll come back alive?"

"Do you?"

"No."

"No more do I." The Resident sighed again, and reached out for a file of papers. "A great pity that you couldn't trace that fellow—what's his name?"

"Paul Rodgers—the Red Wolf of Arabia," responded Barrington.

The Resident bent over the file. Barrington Pasha realized that the interview was at an end. He removed his monocle and stalked forth into the blatant sunshine of the Cairo streets.

FROM the Hawker Fury, tearing the sky at two thousand feet, it seemed a dull steel rail stretched across the desert.

Wing-Commander Browne stabbed a gloved finger downward.

"Suez Canal!" he yelled.

"Really," replied Michael Wilton of the Foreign Office, indifferently.

The only other passenger in the open plane leaned out and gazed down with interest. A white flying-helmet made a smooth casque of her head and hid the coils of honey-colored hair tucked carefully away. It did not hide the wind-flushed face with features that were classic in their purity, nor the blue eyes set wide apart, dancing with the excitement of this adventure.

Wing-Commander Browne had admired those eyes before they set off from Heliopolis. Now he twisted round from the controls and indicated the goggles over his own eyes.

"Better put your goggles on," he shouted.

"Must I?" she pouted.

"'Fraid so. We may run into sand soon."

"Very well."

She smiled, and covered those dancing blue eyes. Wing-Commander Browne had already decided that Laura Wilton was a rare beauty, almost comparable with his own wife, Jenny. He wished that Michael Wilton had been equally companionable.

THE pilot turned away from the glimpse he had of his passengers. It was necessary to handle the Hawker Fury with some care. The speedometer needle was quivering at two hundred miles an hour. But the hot air over the desert was full of pockets. Browne sent the machine climbing to eight thousand feet. A little smoother, there. They should reach Bagdad before sunset.

As the machine ascended, and the burnt sienna of the desert receded, it seemed that the roaring propeller was churning through endless blue silk. Wing-Commander Browne reverted to his own thoughts. Strangely enough, that barren desert with its mirages and sunshine phantoms always engendered one baffling character in his mind—the Anglo-American Intelligence officer Paul Rodgers.

There was a time when Browne had stood with Rodgers on the quay at Port Saïd watching a liner prepare for passage through the Suez Canal. With his usual abruptness, Red Rodgers had disappeared. But within a few hours both men had been engaged in a desperate attempt to prevent the piracy of gold bullion from a liner in the Suez



Canal. The two men had succeeded, and Browne had been promoted for his share in the adventure. He had married Jenny, and Rodgers had even managed to be present at the ceremony. Then, once again he had disappeared.

"I'd give a month's pay to set eyes on him again," Browne thought.

Mechanically, he reached out for the wireless receivers, adjusted the ear-phones, and began to ask Gaza for a weather report. Gaza promptly replied:

Flying conditions bad west of Rutbah Wells. Sandstorm reported. Suggest you descend here for night.

Browne scribbled the report on a paper block. Then he poked his passenger from the Foreign Office. Wilton blinked awake and scanned the message which was thrust into his hands.

"What about it?" asked Browne.

Wilton calmly tore the paper and allowed the pieces to flutter away.

"Go right on to Bagdad," he declared. "My business is urgent."

"Those sandstorms can be dangerous," warned the pilot.

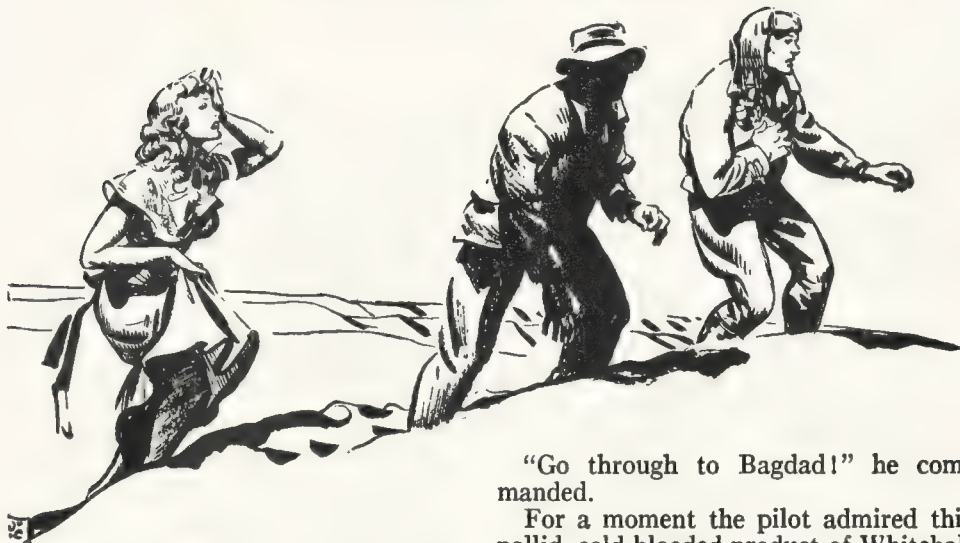
"I'm not afraid of them," shouted Wilton pointedly.

Browne flushed, and jerked his head toward the woman.

"Don't you think, under the circumstances—" he began.

"I gave you my orders," said Wilton sternly. "You'll go through to Bagdad."

Browne shrugged. In the ordinary course, he would have ignored the Foreign Office man and descended at Gaza, for he had flown too often in these parts not to know the dangers of that sky suddenly becoming a wall of sand. But once again he reached out for the radio and began to tap out a message to Gaza:



Am going on. Report me to Rutbah Wells.

There came back a laconic "O.K." It was not the duty of Gaza to interfere, whatever opinion they might have of a pilot who was risking everything. And in a few moments they were droning steadily over a heap of white bricks surrounded by a yellow sea of sand.

"Gaza!" pointed Browne, with an encouraging smile to Laura Wilton.

"Looks a heap of ruins," she laughed.

"They haven't bothered to rebuild it since Samson destroyed it," grinned Browne.

Wilton yawned—but clutched at the side of the cockpit as the pilot sent the Hawker Fury climbing still farther in the sky.

Even at ten thousand feet Browne did not feel safe. Rutbah Wells was nearly four hundred miles away—two hours' flying in good weather; but with a sandstorm before them, it might be some time before they got through. He wiped his goggles clean and stared out at the distant horizon. He knew the signs of an approaching sandstorm, and hoped devoutly that he could dodge it. . . .

They had been flying nearly an hour after passing over Gaza. A glance at the map told the pilot that they were in the middle of the great Arabian desert. He decided to talk with Rutbah Wells. His fingers began to tap out a request for weather report. A reply came back, exploding with atmospheric:

Visibility nil. Heavy sandstorm raging. Strongly advise you return Gaza.

Without comment, Brown passed the slip of paper to Wilton. Once again, the Foreign Office envoy ignored it.

"Go through to Bagdad!" he commanded.

For a moment the pilot admired this pallid, cold-blooded product of Whitehall sprawled comfortably at his side. "Maybe the fellow has guts, after all," he decided. Then, behind the mica of his goggles, his eyes narrowed. The blue silk horizon was smeared with something like smoke.

"Keep your heads down!" he shouted. "And hold tight."

He tried to lift the machine higher. But it was already heavily loaded. He managed another five hundred feet, and that was ceiling. With his hands tight on the controls, Browne stared ahead; a black wall seemed tearing toward them.

In a few moments pellets of sand were whipping their faces. The sky had suddenly gone dark. Instinctively, they bowed their heads. The next moment the plane seemed to be caught in a giant hand and hurled spinning toward the earth.

BROWNE, cursing softly, fought desperately to right the machine. He succeeded, after losing a thousand feet. They seemed to be churning through a red glare. Sand was spilling like water into the cockpit, suffocating them as it drove into nostrils, ears and throat.

The Fury roared defiantly with its propeller at this moving wall of sand. The machine was pitching and falling like a small-boat in a heavy sea. Half-blind and suffocating, Browne had his gaze fixed upon the indicators. He cared nothing for direction. All that mattered was altitude and speed.

Amidst that stinging and choking blackness, he caught a glimpse of Michael Wilton. The Foreign Office man had not lost his look of determination. The official mask was still there.

His mouth moved. Browne bent down to hear what he was saying.

"Better turn back—to Gaza."

"Too late!" snarled Browne, and once again struggled frantically with the machine as the plane went into a spin.

He righted it. They were as low as fifteen hundred feet. They might have been drowning at the bottom of the sea, so far as vision was concerned. And the Hawker Fury seemed like a mole burrowing through sand. He pulled the stick toward him to send the machine climbing again. It was then there came the first sputter of the engine.

"That's done it!" shouted Browne, although nobody could hear him. "Sand in the blasted engine."

Another gust swung the machine sideways. The sputtering was steady now, not intermittent. In the cockpit sand was ankle-deep. About them was a roaring red darkness. Half-blinded as he was, Browne had that awful moment which so many pilots experience, when he was uncertain whether he was flying upside down or right side up. All he knew for certain was that the sandstorm was driving them relentlessly to earth.

Five hundred feet now. There was every chance of driving into a hillock.

Three hundred feet. He remembered the parachutes. Too late to jump.

Two hundred feet. He cursed the machine for refusing to rise. It replied with a final sputter, and the engine cut out.

Almost immediately the desert seemed to rise with an engulfing triumph toward them. With a sick feeling in his stomach, Browne fought desperately to avoid the crash. He had a vision of Jenny, his wife, giving a tea-party in Cairo that afternoon, and of a slim gray-eyed man with red hair strolling into the room with a casual smile—Paul Rodgers.

The next moment they struck the desert. There was a tearing sound, and something like a shriek of triumph. A heavy blow came against his head. The red darkness was flecked with flames. He remembered nothing more.

Whining like an unleashed monster, the desert sandstorm swept over the wreckage.

COMING back to life was a painful process for Wing-Commander Browne. There was an aching in his limbs, and stabs of pain in his head. His eyes blinked open to the sky. The next moment a woman's face gazed down upon him as from out of a cloud. The face

gave a faint smile of relief. He realized that his head was in the lap of Laura Wilton.

"So you're safe!" he breathed.

"We're all safe, thanks to you," she nodded. "I never imagined you would make that landing. Feeling better now?"

"I'm all right." He staggered to his feet, that stabbing pain still in his head. He reeled, but the woman had her arm about him. "Thank—thank you," he muttered. "What about your husband?"

"A little fretful that he isn't in Bagdad." The woman smiled. "Otherwise, quite sound."

It was true enough. Browne could see the Foreign Office envoy gazing in that same coldly disapproving fashion at the crumpled wing of the Fury. Instinctively the pilot staggered in the direction of the machine. It seemed almost submerged in the sea of sand that the storm had swept over it. The nose was buried, and the fuselage tilted at an acute angle.

WILTON turned dourly as the pilot approached. Browne saw, with grim satisfaction, that the dapper appearance of the man from Whitehall had suffered somewhat in the crash. Trousers and coat were torn. The once pallid face was smeared absurdly with oil.

"I'm very thirsty," complained Wilton. "D'you carry anything to drink in these damned planes?"

"There's a water-bottle in the cockpit," said Browne. "I'll root it out if you'll go and look after your wife. She needs a good drink first of all."

As he turned away, Browne delved inside the cockpit for the precious water-bottle. At the same time he brought forth another object, a loaded pistol. This he slipped quickly into his pocket. He gave a swift glance at the extent of the wreckage, and then limped slowly back to where Wilton and his wife were standing. Both watched him as he poured some of the precious water into a little tin cup.

"Except for the water in the engine, this is all we possess," he said. "Will you have the first drink, Mrs. Wilton?"

"You need a drink more than we do," said Laura.

"Nevertheless, I insist."

She shrugged and took the cup. She was desperately thirsty, as he could see. Her hands trembled, and she tried not to drink greedily.

"And now I'll take my share," growled out Wilton.

"Michael!" she protested.

Browne poured out another cup and handed it to the Foreign Office envoy. It was drained at a gulp.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"If you've no objection, I too will have a drink," said the pilot.

He took a careful ration.

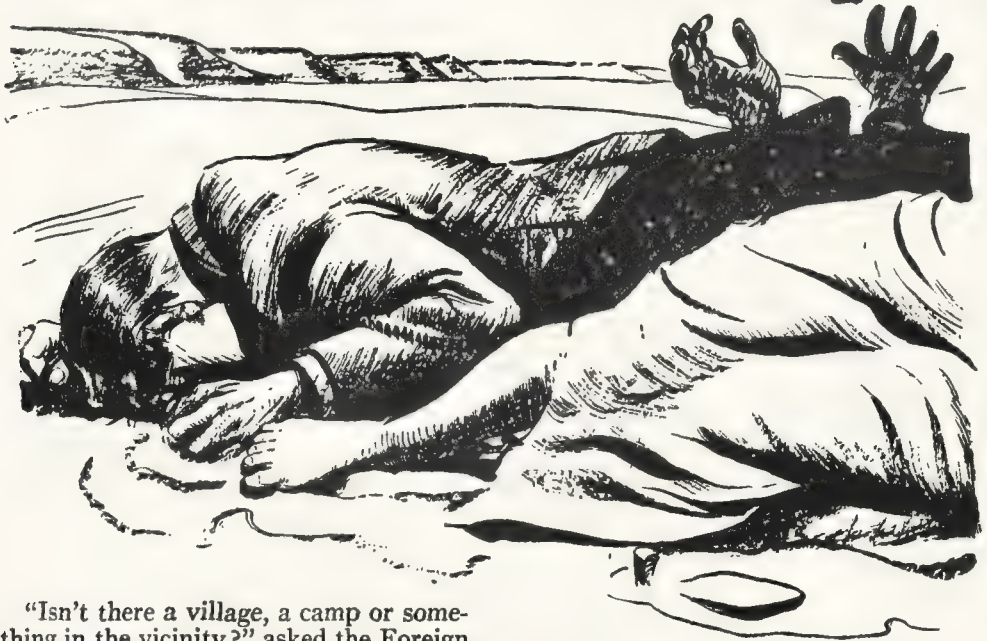
"And what now?" demanded Wilton.

Browne was already striding back to the machine. He glanced at the sky. The sandstorm was practically over. There were still a few gusts of flying sand, but the sky was again visible. It was obviously late afternoon. He looked at his watch. It had stopped at five minutes past three. That must have been the moment of the crash. He judged the time to be after four. His first concern was the radio. One glance was sufficient—it was hopelessly wrecked. No chance of sending a message to Rutbah Wells. And the Fury was in no better state. One wing was doubled and almost torn away. The landing-wheels were buckled, and the propeller was wrecked. . . . They were hopelessly marooned, a hundred miles from Rutbah.

With a serious, set expression on his face, Browne turned to his passengers.

"I'm afraid you won't be in Bagdad tonight, Mr. Wilton," he said laconically.

From the brassy sky came a vulture; it landed with a flutter of wings beside the inert group. One of Wilton's hands moved convulsively.



"Isn't there a village, a camp or something in the vicinity?" asked the Foreign Office man.

Browne laughed harshly.

"Maybe you'll realize in time that this is the Arabian desert. The chances of any human being within a hundred

miles of us is as remote as it can be. And unless a djinni of the desert materializes with a flying carpet, it's doubtful whether we'll see civilization again."

Silence followed this statement. Browne hated himself for its effect upon the woman. She stared at the horizon of sand-hills, the flat line of desert where already the sun was sinking, and she shivered slightly.

Only Wilton remained unperturbed. He stared at the pilot.

"You've got to do something—quickly," he remarked.

Browne held himself together. Already he hated this striped-trousered, self-assured individual from Whitehall.

"Maybe they'll send out planes to look for us tomorrow," he said. "They'll realize in Bagdad that something has happened when we don't turn up there. I'm afraid we've got to sit by the plane and wait for them."

"Are they likely to spot us here?" asked the woman.

"Sure to," lied Browne bravely. "They know our route, and although that sand-storm blew us off the regular one, they'll circle round until they do spot us."

But he knew, only too well, that their plight was desperate. He himself had flown with search-parties over this desert seeking missing pilots. He knew that from above, only a miracle or a trick of light would reveal them to searching planes. Even if a ship droned over them, it would be a difficult problem attracting the attention of the pilot.

"Well, then, if we've got to spend the night by this cursed plane, I suggest we have another drink," broke in Wilton.

"The next drink will be in the morning—unless Mrs. Wilton is desperately in need of one," decided Browne.



Once again the two men eyed each other steadily.

"I can hold out until the morning," said Laura quietly.

"That settles it, then," murmured Browne, slinging the water-bottle by its strap across his shoulders. "Let us hope that the search-planes do find us."

"But they must," said Wilton.

"They will, if they can."

"And if they don't?"

"We shall die rather uncomfortably of thirst."

The face of the Foreign Office envoy went a shade paler.

"Aren't there any cursed Arabs, or Bedouins in this desert?" he asked.

"Let us hope that we don't meet them," said Browne, grimly. "They are apt to be unfriendly."

"Quite right," broke in a voice in English with a slight foreign accent. "They are unfriendly."

BOTH men looked up, startled. In the gloom now sweeping over the desert they saw standing before them a man in a smart khaki uniform, a long white burnous fluttering gently from his shoulders. His swarthy, handsome face was wearing a smile. He stood upon a little hillock of sand gazing down upon them.

At the same moment Laura Wilton gave a slight scream. A group of hooded figures had materialized behind her as though rising from the sand. Wing-Commander Browne gave a swift glance round. They were surrounded by Arabs.

"I shouldn't use that revolver," said the man in uniform. "It would be useless. My men are covering you."

Browne dropped his hand.

"That's better," went on the voice. "Please throw the revolver in front of you. . . . You heard me!"

Shrugging, Browne obeyed. Once again he glanced at the surrounding Arabs. Their numbers had increased. Resistance was futile. He challenged the figure on the hillock.

"Who are you?"

A chuckle, and the handsome swarthy face broadened in another smile.

"Permit me to introduce myself," he said, making a mock bow. "I am General Kula Kastamuni."

"Kastamuni!"

"General Kastamuni, I said. I see that my name is not unknown to you. Yes, I am the leader of the Brethren of the Black Tents. We have sworn to drive every white man out of these lands. Al-

ready we have fought in Palestine. We are still fighting. We shall go on fighting until the Arabs can call these deserts their own."

"Kula Kastamuni!" Wilton was repeating the familiar name. Like a flash he remembered the warning he had received when he was leaving the Residency in Cairo. So this was the man, the Turkish soldier of fortune who was organizing the tribes in the desert.

THE fellow was calmly lighting a cigarette and gazing with amusement upon his three captives. Wilton, despite his bedraggled appearance, decided upon a Whitehall approach.

"General Kastamuni, I have heard of you."

"So?"

"I think you would be well advised to supply us with camels and allow us to proceed to Bagdad."

"A reasonable request," smiled the Turk. "May I ask you are?"

"I am Michael Wilton of the British Foreign Office. The lady is my wife. This other—er—person is the pilot of the plane which was brought down by a sandstorm."

"Wilton of the Foreign Office," mused the Turk. "Yes, I heard of your arrival in Cairo. Please do not be surprised. We also have our radio, even though we are in the desert. Yes, a fortunate mischance, your plane descending here. I particularly wished to meet you, Wilton."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I knew of your mission. You have all the necessary authority to smash the society of the Brethren of the Black Tents, eh? Well, it may interest you to know that I had arranged for your assassination in Bagdad tomorrow, or at the latest Thursday. And now the sandstorm has delivered you into my hands. Allah is indeed great."

Wing-Commander Browne interposed roughly:

"Enough of this talk, Kastamuni. What are you going to do with us?"

The Turk stepped down from the hillock and thoughtfully picked up the revolver from the sand.

"I'm going to send you to Bagdad," he said quietly.

"Then you'll give us camels," said Wilton.

"Alas, I cannot spare a single beast," said the Turk, shaking his head. "I'm afraid, gentlemen, you must walk. And the lady too, I regret to say."

"But it's impossible to walk that distance," burst out Browne. "We could not exist three days on the little water we have. I ask you to let us stay by this plane and give us the chance of being discovered by a search-party."

"That, I regret, is the one thing I cannot permit," replied the Turk suavely. "It is bad enough that your British planes should come flying in this particular area. I have no desire to encounter them. In fact, I'm going to burn your plane and cover the débris with sand. It's an inconvenient object. And I must insist that you set out at once upon your walk to Bagdad."

"You realize that you are sending us to our death!" shouted Browne.

"Maybe."

"Why don't you shoot us and have done with it?"

"Because the bodies of dead men who have been shot tell tales. Men who die of thirst—well, shall we say that it is all a regrettable accident."

WILTON tried a final bluff in his best manner.

"I warn you, General Kastamuni, that the British Government will take a most serious view of your action."

"I am sure the British Government is already taking a serious view of my actions," smiled the Turk.

He held out a gloved hand as he spoke. The attaché-case, containing the full dossier from Whitehall of the Arab situation, had been discovered in the plane by one of the rifling Arabs. Seeing this precious object, Wilton made a step forward.

"Please do not trouble, Mr. Wilton," said the Turk. "I can read English perfectly. I had the pleasure of two years as a student at Balliol. At least, I learned to read at Oxford."

"I wish to heaven they'd taught you the virtues of being human," snapped Wilton.

"They taught me to be kind to dogs," smiled the Turk. "A charming sentimental trait in your Englishman. I found that he would take a starving dog into his house, but rarely a starving man. I would like to elaborate my impressions of the English, Mr. Wilton, but the time has come for us to say farewell."

Even as he spoke, a red glare shot up into the sky. Wing-Commander Browne turned swiftly. The Arabs had fired his plane. In a few moments it was a twisted mass of red-hot débris.

"That is your direction!" declared the Turk, silhouetted with pointing finger in the last lick of flame.

"If you are seen within ten miles of this spot by dawn, I shall allow my men to deal with you as *they* wish," he added. "Good evening, gentlemen; and my profound apologies, madam."

He stood there, a sardonic, aloof figure watching the two men and the woman as they stumbled forth into the star-spangled darkness of the desert.

ON the third day they were at the end of their tether. With glazing red-rimmed eyes and an all-pervading, devouring thirst, they lurched and staggered on, through that endless desert. With a dirty bandage wound about his head, and his uniform in rags, Wing-Commander Browne realized that Wilton was speaking to him. The desperate white face of the man from Whitehall showed his mouth working convulsively. Browne inclined his head to the hoarse whisper.

"Must—have—water!"

Instinctively, Browne clutched the water-bottle that dangled from his shoulder.

"There's only enough—for sip each—when sun goes down," he crackled in reply.

Wilton's eyes seemed to have become shifty and glittering.

"I must—have sip—now," he croaked.

"No."

Even as he spoke, the desperate ragged figure of the man from Whitehall leaped with outstretched hands at him.

With leaden hands Browne tried to fight back. The effort was too much for him. He pitched forward in the sand, cursing feebly at his weakness.

Wilton glanced up. A gleam of joy came to his eyes at the sight of the prone air-man. Browne was trying desperately to raise himself.

Wilton fell across him, clawing for the water-bottle. His falling weight squeezed the last ounce of effort from Browne's body, who lay deathly still. With trembling fingers, Wilton uncorked the water-bottle and tipped it up to his cracked lips. He gurgled noisily and drained the bottle. Then with a mad laugh he lurched away and fell supine in the sand. . . .

The afternoon sun beat down relentlessly upon them. In ten minutes a dark speck materialized in the brassy sky. It came lower and resolved into a vulture. It landed with a flutter of wings beside the huddled, inert group. One of Wil-



"I'm inclined to believe you exaggerate the dangers out here," said the Whitehall man.

ton's outstretched hands moved convulsively. With another flutter, the vulture hopped to a near-by hillock of sand and perched there, winking obscene eyes and waiting.

But soon afterward it was again but a speck in the sky. It had been scared away by a group of Arabs mounted on camels. These Arabs had descended, and bent their heads to the three bodies. A few moments later they had slung them over saddles, and were racing their scraggy beasts toward the setting sun. . . .

It was in the cool of the evening that Wing-Commander Browne blinked open his eyes. The choking clutch of thirst had gone from his throat. His bruised and aching body seemed to be resting on something soft. A strange, soft yellow light enveloped his immediate vision. He sniffed appreciatively—an oil lamp.

He looked up, fearing the brassy sky. Instead, a dim, flapping grayness. Slowly he realized that he lay on a bed in a tent. A sun-browned hand stretched toward him, holding a cup of precious water. He drank it greedily.

"That's better, my dear fellow," said a quiet but vibrant voice.

He glanced at the figure by the bed. A face swathed in an Arab burnous, sun-browned, out of which stared a pair of gray and anxious eyes, was caught for a moment in the yellow radiance of the hanging lamp.

"Paul Rodgers—Red Rodgers!" gasped Browne. "Are we both dead, then?"

A familiar chuckle was the response.

"You were well on your journey to Paradise when my men found you lying in the desert. Take it easy, Browne; you can tell me all about it in your own time."

BUT the sudden recollection of that last struggle in the desert caused the air-man to rouse himself.

"The others?" he gasped.

Red Rodgers pointed to two other beds in that tent, on which lay the forms of Wilton and his wife.

"They're coming round, slowly," he said. "You were all pretty far gone. Did you have a crash in the desert?"

Browne strove for memory.

"Crashed during a sandstorm—forget how many days ago," he said.

"Three," explained Red Rodgers.

"Doubled up a wing and smashed the radio."

"Bad business. You were flying to Bagdad?"

Browne nodded. "With that damned official and his wife as passengers," he groaned.

"The woman seems unusually lovely," remarked Rodgers dryly.

Slowly, Browne began to falter forth the tale. He told of the crash, and the arrival of that Turkish soldier of fortune Kula Kastamuni. How they were ordered to go forth into the desert and the desperate march of the three that followed.

During the recital of this tale, Paul Rodgers flung back the burnous from his head. In the light of the lamp was revealed that flaming crop of hair which had earned for him his sobriquet of the Red Wolf of Arabia. It was a comforting and familiar sight to Wing-Commander Browne.

"An unusual story," agreed Rodgers at the end. He brought forth a cigarette-case and offered it to the pilot. Browne lit one, and saw a stern look on Red Rodgers' face as the match flared between them.

"Why this unusual haste to Bagdad?" asked Rodgers further.

Sitting up on the bed, Browne shrugged. "Only Wilton can tell you that. He's been sent out by the Foreign Office. Had a regular dossier with him—to which Kastamuni calmly helped himself. . . . By the way, Rodgers, what about the woman?"

Red Rodgers sighed. "Yes, the woman is a complication."

Browne realized that this famous adventurer was still shy and deliberately elusive where women were concerned. There was hardly a white woman east of Suez who had not thrilled to the exploits of Red Rodgers and made a glamorous hero of him in her own heart. Maybe Rodgers suspected it, and was made wary, even coldly aloof, when in the presence of women.

"But what the devil are you doing here in the desert?" asked Browne. "We all considered you dead. They've even had your obituary in the Cairo and Bagdad newspapers. Jenny wept over them."

Rodgers smiled.

"I'm sorry if the report of my death brought tears. But I allowed the story to go uncontradicted because—well, I wanted to appear dead."

"In heaven's name, why?"

CHARACTERISTICALLY, Paul Rodgers put up a hand and smoothed the back of his head.

"Supposing I say that there is a time in every man's life when he wants to die. No, I don't mean to be obliterated. But to die, and be born again. It's a great theme of the New Testament, and is not unknown in the Koran. But I can see that you don't understand."

"It's never happened to me."

"It will," nodded Rodgers. "You're still young, my dear fellow. I repeat, there comes a moment to men, usually at the height of their success, when even the sweets of success are sour to them. Life, however pleasant, seems merely a drudgery of existence. They have an impelling desire to drop out of it. Some become ascetics, and go forth alone in the wilderness. The men imprisoned in cities usually run away with a chit of a girl not worth a moment's consideration. It is a midsummer madness in men, and should not be ignored even by the philosophers."

A groan from one of the other beds told of the diplomat from Whitehall struggling back to life. Wing-Commander Browne ignored it. He was intent upon the serious, student-like face.

"My dear Paul," he persisted, "nobody for one moment considers your adventurous existence a drudgery. A man of a hundred and one exciting adventures, being bored! It's fantastic."

"The only adventures which matter to me take place in the mind, or the soul,"

said Red. "All the rest is the vanity of existence. Yes, I know I had achieved success. I gained for myself the bubble of reputation. But I deliberately pricked it, when it seemed most shining and glamorous."

"Why?"

"Because my adventures had ended in failure," went on Rodgers in that vibrant, appealing voice. "From Mecca to Cairo, from Jerusalem to Bagdad, from Damascus to Addis Ababa, I had ridden my camels, fought, and struggled for the prestige of the white race. I had achieved a reputation as a first-class Intelligence officer. They even said I had made and unmade kingdoms."

"And so you had," enthused Browne.

"But lost the kingdom of my own soul," insisted Rodgers. "The sense of utter failure came to me when I stood in the streets of Jerusalem and saw a battle begin between Arabs and the khaki-clad British. Palestine flamed into revolt. Jews were massacred. The rattle of machine-guns sounded in the streets."

"An unpleasant business, but it had to be tackled," said Browne. "I was in it—bombing."

"I also was asked to join in the killing," went on Red Rodgers. "But killing is not my *métier*. Moreover, my sympathies were divided. There were many among those Arabs whom I liked and loved. They had a deep-rooted principle at stake; whereas the British were only concerned in restoring law and order."

"There's a good deal to be said for law and order."

"I agree. Yet because it had disappeared in Palestine, I sensed my own failure. True, I had warned the authorities—told them that an outbreak was imminent. Disregarding my reports, they waited until murder was let loose. Then they sent for me. I knew what they wanted. They wished me to betray men who had been my companions in the desert, fighters by my side in many an adventure, brave men whom I loved. I refused. I rode away into the desert."

"SO that was why you disappeared," murmured Browne.

"Yes, I lost myself to find myself," said Rogers reflectively. "For a year, now, I have been very happy. A few bold spirits gathered round me in the desert. Arabs, all of them. They knew me as Al Ared, their chief. This lost



"Kastamuni, you're a damned scoundrel!" Wilton

oasis, known as the Blue Oasis, is our camp. We live simply, according to the creed of the Koran. We ask nothing of any man."

"And you have no desire to return to civilization?"

"Not the slightest, my dear fellow. The desert may seem to you a harsh mother, but we find her kind and real. I, who have failed, find peace and comfort at this Blue Oasis. I can ask nothing more from life, except that the outside world should regard me as dead."

There was silence for a moment.

"I can imagine," said Browne at last, "that our arrival in your camp is a problem."

"A great problem," nodded Rodgers, rising abruptly.

From the other bed the voice of Michael Wilton was crying for water.

THERE is no god but God, and Allah is his prophet."

In serried ranks the whole of the Arabs of the Blue Oasis had bowed and genuflected in the direction of Mecca. Now the evening prayers were ended. Little strips of carpet had been rolled up; the blue haze of wood-fires swathed the camp, and the first evening star glittered brightly in the sky.

A brawny, bearded Arab led the three refugees to a huge tent that spread itself

on the outskirts of the camp. He pulled aside the heavy folds of the entrance, and indicated that the trio were to enter.

Laura Wilton was the first to pass into the tent, followed by her husband. Wing-Commander Browne brought up the rear. It was a strange scene that greeted them: Heavy lamps swung against the canvas ceiling and spilled light upon the luxurious rugs strewn at their feet. Several fierce-looking Arabs armed with curved knives and swords stood apart from the central figure—Paul Rodgers, known to others as the Red Wolf of Arabia, but to this Bedouin tribe, of which he was the chief, as Al Ared.

A striking figure! He was garbed in a burnous of pure white. The flame of his hair shone in the lamplight. A single gold-encrusted dagger was at his side. There was a calm aloofness in his manner, and an attitude of complete authority in his gestures. He looked what he was, an Arab chieftain who could outride, outfight, outwit any member of the tribe.

Something was shouted in Arabic as the two men and the woman entered. Rodgers gestured to some cushions at his feet.

"Be seated, please," he said in English.

Michael Wilton crossed his ragged-trousered legs and squatted. So did



cried. Paul Rodgers seized his hand—but too late.

Wing-Commander Browne. Laura Wilton sank gracefully to the cushions. She gave a quick, searching glance at Rodgers. He flushed slightly.

"I hope, Mrs. Wilton, that you are quite recovered from your ordeal?"

"Thanks to you and your men, Mr. Rodgers, perfectly."

Her voice was low in tone yet with full richness. Because of her torn dress, she had with feminine acuteness swathed herself in a cloth borrowed from an Arab woman. It revealed frankly her slim, athletic figure. Her broad-set eyes and appealing, intelligent face gazed upon the remarkable man in the pure white burnous.

"Mr. Wilton," began Rodgers, "I have brought you to my tent for a purpose this evening. I hope you will appreciate my motives. I understand from Wing-Commander Browne that after the plane had crashed into the desert you encountered a certain General Kastamuni."

"A damned Turkish scoundrel!" broke in Wilton. "When I arrive in Bagdad, I intend to give orders for Kastamuni to be hunted down and shot. He not only robbed me, but sent me callously to what was almost certain death. I'll put an end to his career."

Rodgers raised a slim hand.

"Softly, Mr. Wilton! I have no doubt that the British authorities in Cairo and

Bagdad echo your desire to capture General Kula Kastamuni. But it so happens that he knows the desert and the methods of desert warfare better than any British patrol."

"Nevertheless, if ever I set eyes upon him again, I'll wring his damned neck."

Red Rodgers smiled grimly.

"You will set eyes on him again, Mr. Wilton—this evening. He happens to have sent an envoy announcing that he is on his way to the camp of the Blue Oasis. He should be here in a few minutes."

The man from Whitehall stared, and then struggled to his feet.

"If that is so, Rodgers," he shouted, "I order you to seize him and bring him a prisoner to Bagdad."

Rodgers gestured him to seat himself.

"I am afraid, Mr. Wilton, that you do not yet understand how sacred is the hospitality of the Bedouin. The fact that I have agreed to receive General Kastamuni in my camp, and to drink coffee with him, insures that he shall also leave this camp unharmed. Such is the tradition among Arabs."

"Don't play the Arab chief with me," spluttered Wilton. "You're one of us, Rodgers, and all this talk about Arab hospitality means nothing. You are still a member of the Intelligence Service, and you do as you're told."

"Do I?" inquired Paul Rodgers.

"Or else you're a damned renegade," went on Wilton. He shook off with disgust a protesting touch from Laura. "Now let us understand each other, Rodgers: Firstly, remember that I am the official representative of Britain, sent out here to quell this ridiculous pan-Arabian movement."

"I shouldn't call it ridiculous," said Rodgers. "I think it's understandable."

"Maybe because you're playing the part of a petty chief or brigand in a desert," said Wilton. "I know your type well enough. Little Lawrences, with cracked ideas of greatness."

The lips of Paul Rodgers had set in a thin line during this outburst. He went a little paler, but he controlled himself well.

"Mr. Wilton," he said quietly, "if you cannot control yourself, I shall be forced to remove you from this meeting."

Wilton swallowed hard.

"Why is Kastamuni coming here this evening?" he demanded.

"I think he hopes to enlist me and the tribe of the Blue Oasis in his pan-Arabian movement," said Rodgers with a smile.

"So you are a renegade—a traitor!" said Wilton bitterly.

"I said he 'hopes' to enlist me," pointed out the Intelligence officer. "We shall see how the meeting progresses. . . . Ah, I think the General has arrived."

THERE was a neighing of horses and the shouts of men outside. A few moments of waiting, and then the curtains of the tent were drawn to allow the entry of General Kastamuni and a group of Arab officers.

The Turkish soldier of fortune was still in the khaki uniform with the white burnous draped from his shoulders. He came forward smartly, a confident smile on his handsome face. He marched toward Red Rodgers, saluted, and then greeted him Arab fashion. Rodgers had risen.

"I trust that Allah keeps you in good health, General?"

"Thanks be to Allah, I feel the world is at my feet."

Rodgers smiled.

"It may interest you to look down at your feet, General. Deign to notice the three whom my men saved from a painful death in the desert."

For the first time since he had entered the tent, the Turk recognized the two

men and the woman. For a second his smile disappeared. A quick frown, and then, with a gesture, he was smiling again.

"I wonder that you trouble yourself, Al Ared, with our enemies. Maybe I should have killed them outright when I discovered them and their plane."

"It would have been more merciful," said Rodgers quietly.

The Turk shrugged. "Well, Al Ared, you have made them your problem now, and not mine. May Allah give you wisdom and strength of purpose to deal with them."

SO far, the conversation had been in Arabic. The man from Whitehall had understood only a few words. But the contemptuous bearing of General Kastamuni angered him. Once again he struggled to his feet and confronted the Turk.

"Kastamuni, you're a damned scoundrel!" he cried in English.

It was in English that the Turk replied. Smilingly, he said:

"I *was* a damned fool, not to shoot you."

"Yes, you were!" shouted Wilton. His hand had dived into the recesses of his ragged suit. It came forth holding a glittering revolver. He leveled it and pulled the trigger. Simultaneously, Paul Rodgers seized the outstretched hand. But he was too late. The shot echoed within the canvas walls. A man in uniform swayed, and pitched to the ground. It was one of the Arab officers in General Kastamuni's suite.

A twist of Rodgers' steely wrist, and the revolver fell to the ground. The Turk bent down and took it up.

"You fool!" said Rodgers.

Wilton did not reply. There was another shot. General Kastamuni had carefully leveled the revolver and fired. His aim was certain. Wilton doubled at the impact and sank to the floor. Laura gave a cry and ran to his side.

Kastamuni tossed the revolver to the ground and dusted his hands.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," he quoted. "Even the blessed Koran teaches us that wisdom."

Everything had happened so swiftly that the Arabs grouped in the tent were still frozen into the inaction produced by that first shot. The next moment pandemonium broke loose. They surged forward. There were cries and countercries.

Red Rodgers raised his hands and shouted commandingly:

"Be quiet, you men of the Blue Oasis! It is your chief, Al Ared, who commands you!"

Like a sea balked by a wall, the Arabs fell back. The muttering died away. The only sound that could be heard was the soft sobbing of the woman bent over the dead Michael Wilton. Rodgers allowed his gaze to waver for a moment in her direction.

Wing-Commander Browne saw a look of unutterable sadness on that thin, studious face.

"I wonder if he also was hit!" was the thought that flashed through the pilot's mind.

It seemed that something had suddenly died in Paul Rodgers. Even in that attitude of outstretched arms there was an unusual hesitancy. And not only the air-man had sensed it, but the dark-eyed and swarthy Kula Kastamuni also sensed that he stood upon a moment of triumph. As the Arabs of the Blue Oasis held themselves tense, it was General Kastamuni who spoke.

"The enemies of Allah are in your protection, Al Ared," he said. "It is fitting that those of us who seek a great and free Arabia should withdraw until your decision is made known to us."

And with a sign to those officers who were holding the body of his shot lieutenant, the Turk led the way through the throng of Arabs facing him.

They fell back respectfully. There was even a low muttering, as of approval. Brown hands went to daggers as the body of the dead officer was carried forth. Dark eyes flashed menacingly toward the young white woman who bent sobbing over the body of her husband.

The arms of Red Rodgers fell slowly to his side. He seemed to have become a man weary of life. For a moment his men watched him. Then one Arab turned his back upon the leader. Another did the same. Slowly they filed out of the tent.

IT wanted two hours before the dawn. Asleep in a small tent, Wing-Commander Browne felt a hand shake him, and another hand cover his mouth.

"Be ready to move away in ten minutes," whispered the voice of Red Rodgers. "I have camels waiting. We ride to Bagdad."

Like a shadow he flitted out of the tent. Browne realized that he had gone to rouse Laura Wilton. Quickly the pilot dressed himself in his torn uniform. Cautiously he opened the flap of his tent. A hand gripped him. A boyish voice whispered:

"This way, master!"

The Arab boy led him through the sleeping camp, beyond the watch-fires to the silent desert that spread its death-like face to the black sky. Suddenly shadows loomed ahead. They resolved themselves into the waiting camels, with Rodgers and Laura Wilton already in the saddle.

"Good boy, Abdul," said Rodgers. "Now mount your beast, Browne, and let us get clear away. All my men, with the exception of Abdul, have gone over to General Kastamuni. They will soon launch themselves into the *haj*—a holy war against the whites. They know I am not with them. And there is only death for those who dare to oppose their fury."

Browne mounted his camel. There was a grunting and wheezing as the beasts were urged into movement. They rode steadily for a few minutes.

Laura Wilton, sitting in her saddle, was bleakly silent.

"Go on ahead, Abdul!" ordered Rodgers to the Arab boy. "I will follow in a few minutes."

"Yes, master."

PAUL RODGERS had halted his camel. Twisting his head, Browne saw the man known as the "Red Wolf" silhouetted in the fast-graying dawn. He was gazing upon the Blue Oasis and its camp that lay in the distance. For a year it had been home, a kingdom to this lonely man of desert adventure. There he had ruled and been acclaimed Chief Al Ared. He had loved his men and they had loved him in turn. . . . There he had been happy.

And because a crazy fool had fired a shot in his tent, all this had ended. Paul Rodgers was once again the lone adventurer. He had lost his kingdom, and it was with tears dimming his gray eyes that he gazed his last upon the tents in the desert.

When he caught up again with the party, his thin brown features were set and determined.

"*Illu Bagdad!*" he muttered in Arabic.

"*Illu Bagdad!*" responded Abdul.

Another colorful story by the gifted William Makin will be a feature of our next issue.

SHIPS and MEN

XI—"The Silence of the Sea"

THE report of First Officer Joseph Pertinax of the freighter *Castor and Pollux*, who investigated the loss of the *Diana* off the Maltese coast, is one of the most curious maritime documents in existence. Not for what it says, but for what it leaves unsaid.

Joe Pertinax deliberately suppressed many of the facts in the case. They were too incredible by far, even for a confidential report to the owners. Pertinax knew those owners; his uncle was one of them.

Had he submitted a report of the literal truth as he saw it, they would have eyed one another and asked what the devil was wrong with Pertinax. It would have finished his career with the line then and there. The actual story appears here for the first time, unabridged. As to believing it, you must decide that for yourself.

Whether you believe it or not, you will at least understand why those hard-headed ship-owners, who gave but small credence to table-tipping, to spirits or to miracles, would have been shocked by it, even horrified. And when you read the report that Chief Officer Pertinax did send in, you will comprehend why it was so much better than the whole truth. . . .

There was no love lost between Pertinax and the skipper of the *Castor and Pollux*. Trouble really came to a head when Cap'n Stentor brought a shore-party out to look over the ship. She had been laid up here at Malta for some days with damages, the extent of which were not yet determined. Pertinax was shifting cargo in the main hold to get at the foot of the sprung mast, when the skipper came along and introduced him to the two ladies.

Joe Pertinax saw only one of them. When he shook hands with Lydia, the world flopped over for him, and was never the same world again. He vaguely understood that her brother ran a big trading concern ashore, which was owned by their invalid father, and that the skipper was putting over some deal with him.

But nothing really mattered except those glowing black eyes and their laughing message, and the girl behind them.

Next thing Pertinax knew, he was being invited to dine ashore that evening with the family; the skipper was going too. Then he was taking Lydia over the ship. He was well aware of the sour look that the skipper sent after him, but gave not a hang for it.

Then, when the visitors went below with a stewardess to powder their noses, he found the skipper at his elbow, and a typhoon was blowing up. Captain Stentor was a slim, swarthy, handsome man; he had a way with him, and he stopped at nothing.

"Mister," he said, "you'd better stay in charge aboard here tonight."

"Yeah?" Pertinax met the angry black eyes with his usual cool smile. "Sorry, sir. The second's in charge tonight. I wouldn't pass up that dinner-party for the world."

"You heard me, Mister. Just because you're the owner's nephew—"

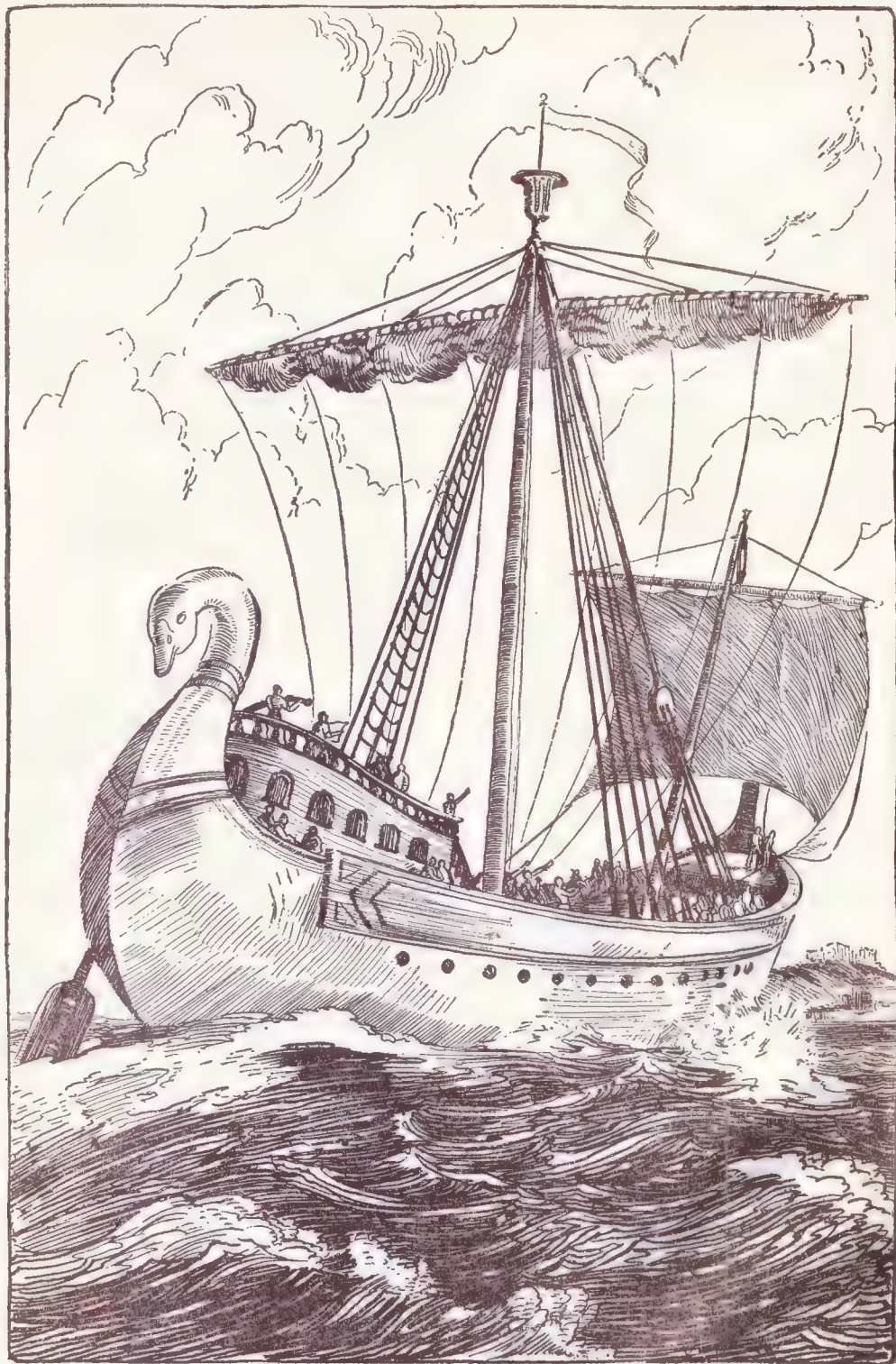
"Belay that stuff!" Pertinax's gray eyes were suddenly aflame. "Are you asking for a showdown?"

"I intend to have discipline upheld. You're taking orders from me, I think?"

PERTINAX broke into a laugh, but his eyes were like sun-blazing ice.

"All right. You were dead drunk the whole way from Alexandria to Cyprus. At Nicosia we lost fifty passengers because police inspection showed the cabins weren't fit for animals, let alone humans; that was your responsibility. We're laid up here because you rammed us into that Greek coaster and damned near lost the ship. What discipline there is aboard this hooker is due to me, not to you. And you even ordered the second officer to falsify the log about it. If you want to go up before a board of inquiry, you stand a good chance of losing your ticket altogether."

Captain Stentor flushed darkly, then paled. All this was true; but he could deny it, and would. And he would be credited. As a captain in the Corn Line,



A Roman freighter, from an etching by Yngve Soderberg

By H. BEDFORD-JONES
and CAPTAIN L. R. WILLIAMS

he was practically above the law, so long as he delivered his cargo safely.

"I'm ordering you to stay aboard tonight, Mister," he said quietly.

"You can go plumb to hell!" said Pertinax. "You're master in name only; I'm doing the work. You've been stopping ashore ever since we dropped the hook, instead of attending to business. And I bet it wasn't Lydia who invited you to dinner, but her brother. Yes, you always did like the ladies; but you're not her stripe, Cap'n."

Stentor showed his white, hard teeth in a snarl.

"Joe, I've broken many a better man than you. Is she worth it?"

"I think she is," replied Pertinax. "Anyhow, I'm going to find out."

"Your funeral, then." And the skipper turned, as the visitors approached.

Pertinax, saying good-by to those flashing black eyes, felt the vivid animation of the girl tug at him like a sentient force; what a girl, what a girl! And she liked him. He could feel her friendliness.

He stared after them thoughtfully. There was nothing much ashore; her folks owned most of the place. Fishing-craft, coasters, warehouses, a small town, with the white villa of her family among green gardens. Going ashore tonight? You bet he was.

DEMETRIUS, the chief steward, came along, grinning. Old Demetrius never missed much; he and the first officer were friends, and understood each other.

"Some dame, Mister!" said he. "I heard some of your run-in with the Old Man. If you need any backing, the whole crew's with you. Affidavits may be worth having."

"Thanks." And Pertinax smiled. "He won't bother me."

"I aint so sure; he's bad medicine," said the chief steward seriously. "Looks to me like a poor morning's work, Joe; but I can't blame you. Boy, what a dame! They tell me her old man just about owns the whole island, but is dying. Publius Trading Corporation, that's him. Say, you heard about the rumpus ashore last night?"

"No. Trouble?"

"Uh-huh. I said it meant trouble when we shipped those two priests of Isis at Alexandria. Every time a priest comes aboard ship, look out for squalls. Those two Egyptians are stopping ashore with the skipper, you know. Well, I hear some talk that last night they raised

hell; I dunno the truth of it. I'm going ashore now to see about cabin stores, and I'll be back after lunch with details. You keep your eye open for those two Egyptians. They're pals of the Old Man, and they're sure hell on magic and such-like."

Joe Pertinax shrugged, and went back to his inspection below. Yes, Captain Stentor was a bad enemy; his very position made him practically immune to attack; he could make things pretty tough for a chief officer he disliked. But what the hell! Lydia was worth it. The very thought of her, the memory of her face, was heart-warming.

IN this year 62 A.D., Rome ruled the world, but all Italy depended on Africa for her food supplies. Hence the development of these huge corn-ships, which could carry above three hundred souls all told. They were the biggest and finest ships afloat.

Any skipper of the subsidized Corn Line was at the very top of his profession. He outranked even a naval captain; he had special privileges granted by the Senate, such as private speculation; and if he got his cargoes through safely, he could do what pleased him on the side.

Corn for Italy! Get the corn through at all costs of delay or life; so ran the orders. Never risk the precious cargo. Lay up for the whole winter, if need be, but get the corn through! Do anything the skipper pleased—but get the corn through, sooner or later. . . . And Cap'n Stentor always got it through.

Egyptians, priests of Isis—huh! Pertinax grimaced at thought of those two passengers, who were now stopping ashore with the skipper. Tall, shaven, cold-eyed men, masters of wizardry and magic; and if report said true, with a finger in all sorts of evil and swindling and graft.

This was the last voyage of the season. Already the winter gales were breaking. Once home, the *Castor and Pollux* would go out of commission until May. Why not come back here for the winter? There were worse places than this tight little island.

"Must be losing my grip," thought Pertinax angrily. "To fall for a dame just because she looks twice at me! Or to think a girl like that would fall for me!"

Still, most would look twice at Joe Pertinax, bronzed and ruddy, clear of eye,

and a Roman citizen to boot—no small honor in those days. He had already passed his master's examination, and had his license; but he might wait years before he got a ship, even if his uncle was one of the owners. A master's berth in the Corn Line was something to dream about. . . .

The chief steward was slow to return. But in mid-afternoon the local agent of the line came aboard. Finding Captain Stentor gone, he was furious.

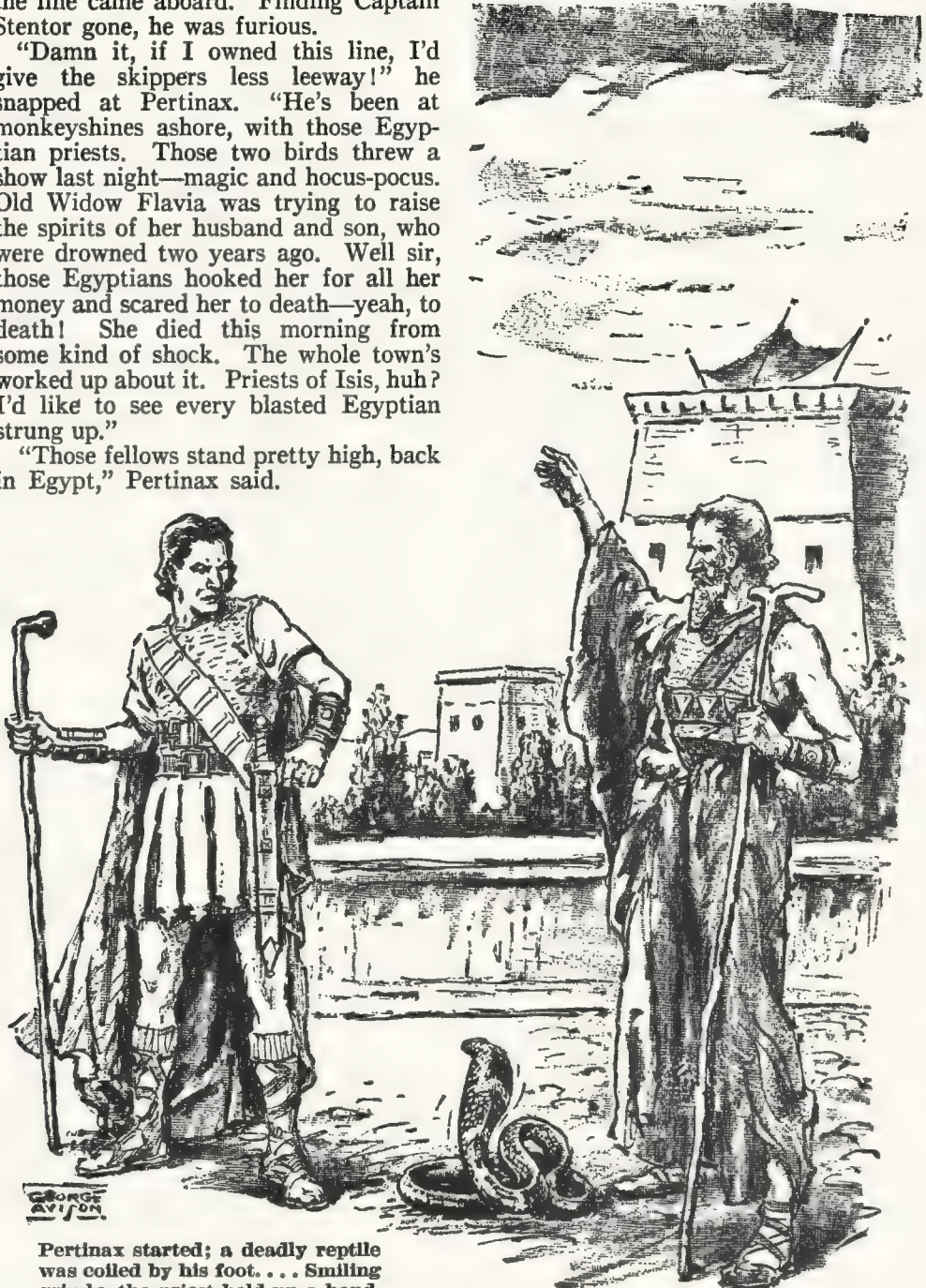
"Damn it, if I owned this line, I'd give the skippers less leeway!" he snapped at Pertinax. "He's been at monkeyshines ashore, with those Egyptian priests. Those two birds threw a show last night—magic and hocus-pocus. Old Widow Flavia was trying to raise the spirits of her husband and son, who were drowned two years ago. Well sir, those Egyptians hooked her for all her money and scared her to death—yeah, to death! She died this morning from some kind of shock. The whole town's worked up about it. Priests of Isis, huh? I'd like to see every blasted Egyptian strung up."

"Those fellows stand pretty high, back in Egypt," Pertinax said.

"Well, the old gods are good enough for me," snorted the agent. "Look here: you know the *Diana*? She cleared from Alexandria two weeks ahead of you."

"Sure. Newest and best ship in the fleet. What about her?"

"That's what I want to know. The mail boat from Syracuse came in yesterday, and I had a letter from our agent there. The *Diana* has never showed up."



Pertinax started; a deadly reptile was coiled by his foot. . . . Smiling grimly, the priest held up a hand.



"Oh, Oh," she gasped, "surely you cannot believe such wild stories!"

"That's nothing to worry about. Maybe she went to Italy direct."

"Nope. She took freight and passengers aboard at Myra, in Lycia, and hasn't been reported since. A Greek trader from Myra brought word of her to Syracuse. She took aboard a pack of prisoners and soldiers under Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Legion, with freight for Syracuse. The Greek reported some cursed bad weather off Crete, and the *Diana* may have caught it."

"That's no sign," replied Pertinax. "Cap'n Ariston is a careful old shellback, the best seaman in the fleet, and he has a top pilot, that chap Myron. Maybe he ran into some Cretan harbor to ride out the weather; it's up to the master's discretion, you know. The corn must come through safe."

"Maybe. But the centurion had charge of a religious maniac, some Jew who happened to be a Roman citizen, being taken to Rome for trial. One of this new religious sect they call Christians; this fellow's name was Paul. There's been a lot of talk about him. And that was sure bad luck for the *Diana*. Well, what's the report on your damage? A sou'wester is blowing up, and the dispatch-boat is getting off tonight ahead of it, with any mail for Syracuse and Italy. I'd like to get our report off."

"It's bad," said Pertinax. "Come along and see for yourself."

The *Castor* and *Pollux* was indeed badly off, with a smashed rudder, sprung mainmast, and so wrenched and strained that to chance the winter gales would be sheer folly.

"Wait till Cap'n Stentor sees those bulkheads!" said Pertinax. "I expect he'll decide to winter here and play safe."

"You don't look unhappy about it," commented the agent, and took his leave.

Unhappy? Chief Officer Pertinax was tickled pink, to put it bluntly, and set about stowing the ship more safely.

The big square mainsail, heavily embroidered with the figures of the heavenly twins Castor and Pollux, was stowed under tarpaulin. The staysail was broken out from the artemon, the highly steeved bowsprit mast; and under this canvas the pilot ran the huge ship to a more secure berth. Then, moored with hawsers, all was set to await the skipper's verdict. That he would decide to winter here, was a certainty.

"Old Man won't be aboard till tomorrow," said the chief steward, coming aboard near sunset. "Big wind blowing up. Publius is throwing a dinner-party tonight."

"I'm going," said Pertinax. "Got to shave and dress pretty quick."

"You going! Boy, you're showing class. But mind your step. Those priests of Isis have played merry hell. The town's pretty mad; also, it's scared stiff. They claim to be divine healers, magicians and what-not. Publius is going to have 'em heal his dad; the old boy is pretty near dead with dysentery and fever. And say! They got some of those Christians here. Ever see any?"

Pertinax shook his head. "Don't believe so. What are they like?"

"Look just like anybody else; you'd be surprised, after all the yarns we've heard about them eating babies and killing folks with magic and so forth. I guess the stories are exaggerated. What about shore-parties?"

"Second officer's in charge for the night. Ask him."

WHEN Pertinax joined the dinner-party that evening,—it was an all-night affair,—a gale was howling over the island. He was astonished by the luxury of the villa, which was large and in the best Roman style. The company was a gay one, with numbers of the chief townsfolk present, and slaves to anticipate every desire. And the dinner was a marvel. As Publius said, it might not come up to Roman standards, but it was the best Malta could furnish.

This Publius, the host, was a young fellow of five-and-twenty, narrow in the eyes, pinched in the nostrils, a sharply

disagreeable type, not at all the shrewd merchant type Joe Pertinax had anticipated meeting. A rich man's son who lacked proper ballast. Reclining on a couch beside that of Lydia, Pertinax looked across the festive board at Captain Stentor, to find the skipper smiling and amiable. So were the two Egyptian priests. All three were at their ease.

THE chief officer used his eyes. When, later, he found himself alone with Lydia, he spoke thoughtfully.

"Strange house, strange man! A queer something about the place, the slaves; I don't know how to explain it. A feeling in the air. Your brother's not like you. He's not what I expected."

She was silent, looking at him, a touch of fear in her gaze. Then she broke out:

"How can you say such things? Are you a magician, like those Egyptians?"

"Eh?" Pertinax laughed suddenly. "Heaven forbid! I spoke before I thought. We're like old friends; I've known you all my life, somehow. . . . Forgive me!"

"I'm not angry, just surprised," she said in a low voice. "It's true. Poor Father has been ill, wasting away; nothing can cure him. The business is going to the dogs. Publius is obstinate, opinionated, afraid of himself and afraid to show it. He's been gambling in wheat futures—oh, if my father were only well again! Then you'd see things different around here. But he'll never leave his bed. These magicians say they can cure him. Useless! They're impostors."

Tears were in her eyes. Barriers were down; they talked together like comrades. The girl turned to his cheerful vigor, confided in him impulsively. Gambling in futures? Pertinax glimpsed the truth as they talked. Publius was sinking hard cash with Captain Stentor, gambling on the latter's knowledge of the grain trade—a sure thing, it appeared. Stentor had gripped the boy with his big talk, was playing him for a sucker, had the two priests of Isis at work. A soft business for the skipper!

"I'll help, yes," said Pertinax presently. "Wait and see; something will turn up. By the way, I hear you have some of that queer sect on your island. You know, the slave religion. They say the slaves are being armed, are going to revolt all over the Empire. This queer eastern cult that eats babies—Christians. Got any of 'em around? I'd like to see some of them."

Fear in her eyes, no doubt of it! She gasped a little.

"Oh, surely you cannot believe such things, such wild stories!"

Pertinax laughed. "Why not? I don't know much about 'em, for a fact; but I'm curious. Can you show me some of them?"

"Yes. Tomorrow, if you like. We must go back now—"

They rejoined the others. Later, when he was taking his leave, Pertinax encountered one of the two Egyptians. The surly priest halted him, looked intently at him.

"Careful, Mr. Pertinax! I can see strange things in your face; an aura of evil surrounds you. Bad influences! The stars are against you. For the next week or so you must be careful. Would you like your horoscope cast?"

"Not I!"—and Pertinax laughed. "I take no stock in frauds and their mum-mery, so good night to you."

He returned to the ship. The gale was sweeping harder over the island; a good three-day blow, it promised to be. . . .

With morning, Stentor came out to the ship, inspected her damages, and signed the entry in the log. He approved all Pertinax had done, and showed himself most friendly.

"Now, Joe, we mustn't have trouble," he said, his hand on the chief officer's shoulder. "You're a good seaman. I must have had a touch of dyspepsia yesterday. Let's forget all about it."

"Right, sir," responded Pertinax.

IN the early afternoon he went ashore and met Lydia. The gale precluded sight-seeing; he went home with her, and there met her father. Once a fine, lordly man, the elder Publius was now no more than a wasted skeleton awaiting the touch of death.

Among the family slaves was an elderly Greek, a scholar who handled the firm's books. Lydia sent for him. After they had talked for a while, the Greek went back to the office. Pertinax was impressed by the man's intelligence, and said so.

"He's one of those Christians you mentioned," said the girl shortly.

"What! That man?" exclaimed Pertinax. "You're joking!" Then, as he met her gaze, he started with sudden comprehension. "My dear girl! You can't mean—"

She nodded gravely. "Yes. I also—one of that sect you despise."

Drawings by George Avison

"Here's the confession that you yourself signed, regarding your culpability for the collision with that Greek trader. On board with him, men—and keep him locked up!"

GEORGE
AVISON

"But I don't!" he rejoined in confusion. "That is—dammit, I didn't dream you could be—well, I don't know much about these Christians—"

"You don't." And her eyes warmed on him. "But I wish you did."

A slave summoned her to her father's bedside, and Pertinax took his leave in a strange tangle of emotions.

He was dumfounded. That this girl could belong to the strange new sect, which was said to comprise only the dregs of the underworld, was simply incredible. Yet she had admitted as much. She had walked suddenly into his life and heart; none the less, Joe Pertinax knew she was there to stay. And yet, to find that she belonged to this cult—well, it was pretty stiff!

Near the entrance to the villa, he came face to face with one of the priests of

Isis. The shaven Egyptian lifted his staff, and in silence pointed to the ground. Looking down, Pertinax abruptly started back. A deadly reptile was there by his foot, a cobra, coiled and in the very act of striking.

Then the priest touched the snake with his staff. Before the very eyes of Pertinax the serpent collapsed and became a lump of inanimate stone. Smiling grimly, the priest held up a hand—and Joe Pertinax remembered nothing more.

Like a man a-dream, he went his way, moving mechanically; his eyes were like those of the staring dead. When he neared the docks, he encountered a throng of the island folk in high excitement. Their language was strange to him. He knew not what was going on. A sudden





tumult broke around him, and knives were whipped out.

Men rushed about, jostling him; he lashed right and left with his fists to clear a passage. A knife sliced at him, not deeply but angrily. With a roar of fury, Pertinax caught a staff from the nearest man and laid about him: Bones were cracked; heads were broken; men went sprawling. Then a dozen of the ship's crew appeared. They charged to the rescue and bore Pertinax off to the ship. He was dazed; he could remember nothing; his whole upper left arm had been slit by the knife.

Captain Stentor bandaged the hurt. Certain leaders of the townsfolk came

aboard, angrily demanding that Pertinax be punished; they said he had wantonly attacked them, and insisted upon a trial. Now, the only magistrate in the island was Publius, a justice of the peace, occupying the bench of his father. The skipper stood up before those men and laughed at them.

"You try an officer of mine, who's a Roman citizen? Not much. If any of your men die and it becomes a murder charge, Pertinax appeals to Cæsar and goes to Rome for trial. Clear out of here, and do it damned quick!"

The crew said admiringly that for once Cap'n Stentor acted like a man.

The skipper took Pertinax to his own cabin, called in two of the stewards, and slapped down a document before the chief officer.

"Sign this requisition of stores, Joe," said he.

Submissive, unquestioning, Pertinax signed, and the two men witnessed his signature. Scarcely was this done and the document put away, with a glitter in the dark eye of Captain Stentor, when there rose a tumult of voices on deck.

Here came young Publius himself, excited and in hot haste.

"Stentor! A shepherd just came in from the other side of the island with word that a big ship was wrecked there last night. Most or all of the ship's company were saved. A corn ship, they say. It must be the *Diana*!"

Stentor leaped up with an oath.

"The *Diana*! Then we've lost a pile of money, my lad. Here, wait!" He glanced at the expressionless Pertinax. "You hear that, Joe? How'd you like to go and draw up a report on the loss?"

"All right," said Pertinax blankly. Stentor swung around to Publius, talked under his breath for a moment, and winked.

"Pick a couple of townsmen to guide him—men you can rely on. Understand? We'll be rid of him for once and all."

So Pertinax, his arm in a sling, departed with two guides.

SCARCELY were the three of them beyond sight of the town, when those two men whipped out knives and went for him. Clouded his mind might be, but the one-armed Pertinax was no sheep for the slaughter. He laid out one man with his staff, and the second dropped his knife and shrieked for mercy.

"All right. Lead on," said Pertinax in his dull, staring way.

Some hours later, Pertinax arrived at the scene of shipwreck, where the crew of the *Diana*, with her passengers and soldiers, were being cared for by the country folk. Pertinax was warmly greeted by the ship's officers, who knew him well.

Close to three hundred souls were here, and among them a man who was treated with singular respect by the others. Curious things were said of him. This was the Jewish prisoner Paul, in charge of Julius the centurion.

AS Pertinax was making notes for his report, the centurion came to where he sat with Captain Ariston, and saluted him.

"Greetings," said Julius bluntly. "My prisoner demands speech with you."

"What does he want?" Pertinax said mechanically.

"He says you have need of him. Perhaps he means your hurt arm. He's a healer."

Pertinax stared up dully. Captain Ariston, elderly and broken, went apart with the centurion and spoke frowningly.

"Something wrong with Joe Pertinax. He doesn't seem drunk, but he's not himself. He doesn't seem to know how he got wounded. I don't understand it."

"It's not my affair." The centurion shrugged. "But we all know this Jew has made some remarkable predictions. Then there was that business of the snake who bit him last night but did him no harm. He's insistent on speaking with this man Pertinax."

"Then fetch him along, by all means."

The prisoner, who enjoyed complete freedom of action, was a tall, gaunt man, so remarkable in his sheer force of character as to dominate the whole group. He had brilliant and penetrating eyes under shaggy brows, and a face like a rock. He came to Pertinax, looked into his face for a moment, and touched his arm.

"Take off the bandage," he ordered.

Captain Ariston removed the blood-stained wrappings, and uttered a sharp exclamation. There was no wound, merely a closed scar. The gaunt Jew put out his hand and touched the eyes of Pertinax.

"*Let the evil spirit come out of this man!*" he said sonorously.

There was a moment of silence. Then Pertinax stirred. He stared around, leaped to his feet, and cried out sharply:

"Ariston! You here? Where are we—"

His voice died, surprise and bewilderment struggling in his face. As though wakening from dream, he had no comprehension of where he was, until the others explained matters. To the rest, it looked singularly as though he had really been drunk. Pertinax himself did not know what to think or say.

But once he had the situation in hand, he went ahead with his report, and presently the whole company set forth for town. As they went, Pertinax fell in with Paul and the centurion.

Paul questioned him about the town, about himself. All his mental cloud gone now, Pertinax fell into eager talk with this man, whose strange personal force and unbounded vigor was fascinating and astonishing. Paul eyed him grimly.

"Young man, I was sent to this place for you and for others," said he. "Rejoice not that the evil spirit is departed out of you, for another and more bitter trial is at hand."

His words were hard to comprehend. The centurion nudged Pertinax and told him to watch his step and not stir the Jew up to any religious talk, or the man would prate on by the hour.

When they drew near town, a huge crowd came out to meet the refugees. Captain Stentor and most of his ship's company were there, with Publius and townsfolk and guards. The first thing Pertinax knew, men had closed around him and he was under arrest.

"Arrest?" he cried indignantly. "On what charge? Hey, Cap'n Stentor! What's all this about?"

"Plenty," said the skipper. "Two of the townsmen are dying this moment from your blows. Further,"—and he showed a signed and witnessed document,—"*here's the confession you yourself signed, regarding that matter of graft in the cabin-stores account, and your culpability for the collision with that Greek trader. On board with him, men, and keep him locked up.*"

Confession? Amazed and bewildered, Joe Pertinax was clapped into irons and taken aboard the ship. But the fact that his arm was unhurt caused much wonder.

THAT evening, the two priests of Isis sat in talk with Captain Stentor, in the house he had rented for the winter. All three of them were in high spirits. Publius had definitely engaged the two priests to cure his father, and the fee was a fat one, in advance. The skipper,

who got a share of the "take," had engaged to give the priests his full protection, should aught go amiss with them.

"But how was my chief officer's wound healed?" he asked in perplexity. "And he's recovered from the spell you laid upon him. It's all due to that Syrian or Jew who came with the *Diana's* people. How did he do it?"

"Clever people, these Jews," said one of the priests. "But always nosing into other people's business. We must get rid of him."

PRESENTLY, after some talk, Captain Stentor went out to find Captain Ariston and his pilot Myron. They were indignant with him for arresting Pertinax, until he said his say. Then they became thoughtful.

"Now," went on Stentor cheerfully, "the notes Joe Pertinax made for his report cast the full blame on you and your officers for the loss. You know what that means, boys. Loss of your tickets. No pension. A lay-off for good. And maybe a heavy fine. You dumped your cargo, and that means hell to pay. I clapped Pertinax in irons, so he won't talk; I've got plenty of charges against him. I'll see you through this."

"But how far will this island magistrate go?" demanded Cap'n Ariston.

"The limit," said Stentor. "Don't worry about him. He's fixed. And before the winter's out, I'll marry his sister. Pertinax will be broken; can't help that. And nobody cares about a Jew. Do you go through with it?"

"Guess we'll have to," said Cap'n Ariston, wagging his gray beard. . . .

Aboard his ship, Pertinax sat talking with the chief steward Demetrius, and knew himself a lost man, without realizing how it had happened. Demetrius could give him small consolation.

"You were drunk, Joe, no doubt about it. First came that scrap ashore—two men dying from it now. Then you came aboard and signed that confession; no man in his right senses would have done it, but you did it. The skipper holds all the cards. I hate to admit it, but you're hooked."

"I tell you, I never had a drink!" Pertinax cried angrily. "I just don't recall a thing that happened. Last I remember is meeting one of those damned Egyptians, outside the villa of Publius. Everything else is vague and shadowy."

Demetrius eyed him dubiously. "Well, you sure acted drunk when you came



"Young man, I was sent to this place for you and for others," said Paul.

aboard. Now the Old Man saddles you with his own graft, with negligence in that collision, and with responsibility for that row ashore. It means your ticket is gone, Joe. And on the way to make the shipwreck report, you attacked those two guides. Remember?"

"No," snapped Pertinax helplessly, and gave way to dour despair.

NEXT day, when Demetrius brought in his lunch, he slipped Pertinax a bit of papyrus, with a wink. It was a note from Lydia, short and to the point:

Cheer up. We're working for you. Paul says that in two days you'll be free.

Pertinax snorted scornfully. Paul, indeed! He might have known Lydia would get in touch with that gaunt Jew, who seemed so highly regarded by these Christians. Well, the fellow might be a magician and a healer, but here were cold hard facts, not so easily sloughed off. . . .

It was on this same afternoon that Publius, sitting as magistrate, summoned Julius the centurion before him. Captain Stentor laid forth a complaint, which was backed up by Captain Ariston and the officers of the *Diana*. Paul the Jew was accused of having caused the loss of the great corn ship by his wizardry and spells.

"Your prisoner, Julius," said the young magistrate, "is evidently a dangerous person. The statements of these ship officers all agree."

"Then they lie," said the centurion calmly. "Or it may be that you've

caused them to lie. Had they heeded the advice of this man, the ship wouldn't have gone down."

"You're no seaman," Publius said. "You allow this prisoner at large. As magistrate, I won't have it. He's a public enemy, a Christian, a wizard. I want him kept in close confinement and in chains."

"What you want, and what an officer of Cæsar's may do, are two different things," replied the centurion with open scorn. "So they're trying to blame him for the shipwreck, eh? The rats can't do it. He'll not be chained; and if anything happens to him at your hands, I have plenty of soldiers to hold you to account, Publius."

"I think," said Captain Stentor, "that I have some authority here."

"I don't." The centurion turned on him. "You're a Corn Line skipper, huh? Well, by the gods, I'm a centurion of the Augustan Legion—and you can be damned!"

The hearing promised to grow interesting, when tumultuous shouts sounded from the street. Men came running. Into the courtroom stalked a figure which brought Publius out of his seat, all staring and slack-jawed. It was his father, Publius the elder, who came toward the magistrate's bench with an excited crowd following.

"Well, my son?" he said, smiling. "You see I'm cured. As well as ever, and all done in a moment! What's going on here?"

"Praised be the gods!" cried his son. "Then the Egyptians cured you!"

"Egyptians? Not much! Those two fools were torturing me with their mummery when the Jew came in," said his father. "At the touch of his hand, I was healed. I believe that you're hearing some complaint against him? Well, I'll hear it myself. Your power is revoked. Turn over the bench to me."

INDEED, Publius seemed in perfect health once more, so that amazement and wonder fell upon all those in the courtroom. Taking his place on the bench, Publius the elder gave an order, and the crowd parted to let Paul come through.

The gaunt Jew nodded to the centurion, then fastened his penetrating gaze upon Captain Stentor.

"There is no need of a hearing," he said in his slightly accented Greek. "The first officer of the *Castor and Pollux* has

investigated this shipwreck and will bear witness to the truth. This man here, who brings false testimony in all things, bears the seal of death in his face. Let him go, nor listen to his charges; for when the sun sets, he will be gathered to his fathers. Those who sin without law, shall also perish without law."

There fell a dread silence. Captain Stentor rose and tried to speak. A pallor stole into his swarthy features. He could utter no words. Under the undeviating gaze of the tall gaunt Jew, he suddenly turned and strode out of the courtroom.

NOW came guards, bringing with them the two priests of Isis. Those dour men stalked in, grimly proud and scornful.

"Is there any charge against us?" one of them demanded.

"There is," said Publius. "I saw enough of your rascally doings while I lay sick and dying. You're fakers and grafters. You've extorted money from my son under false pretenses."

"The judge cannot be accuser, for that is the law," said one of the Egyptians scornfully. "Who, then, is it that accuses us?"

"I," spoke out the gaunt Jew, Paul. "I accuse you of spells and sorcery. Pertinax, chief officer of the *Castor and Pollux*, will bear witness against you, and will himself lay fresh accusation."

"And what of it?"

"Just this." Paul stretched forth his arm, pointing at them. "What you do for money, I do for love. What you do in the name of Isis and by power of the devil, I do in the name and by the power of God."

The magistrate Publius leaned forward, frowning.

"I do not quite comprehend," he said. "Paul, do you desire to lay charges against these men whom you accuse? Do you seek their punishment?"

Paul, grim and gaunt, regarded the two priests, and his deep eyes flamed.

"Such is not the faith I preach," said he slowly. "It is not I, but God, who requires punishment. The vast silence of the sea is the patience of God. Loose these men. Let them go their way and seek their own appointed destiny, for it comes not by my hand. Woe unto you, Egyptians! When you draw the knife, it shall be turned against you both!"

"A fine court, this, where a prisoner gives orders," one of the two priests said.

They walked out, with no man hindering them.

Now, Captain Stentor had gone out to his own ship, and with him Captain Ariston and the officers of the *Diana*, in no little confusion and anger. Once in the cabin, Captain Stentor listened to them; he was white and shaken, a queer look in his eyes.

"You've made a fine mess of things, Stentor," said Captain Ariston. "You persuaded us to throw all blame on that Jew. Well, I didn't like it from the start. Something about that fellow it doesn't pay to monkey with. And now where are we? The centurion gives us the lie. The magistrate's father walks in and changes the whole set-up. This Jew suddenly towers over everyone in sight, and now—"

A groan broke from Cap'n Stentor. Sweat was standing out on his face.

"Forget it all, forget it!" he cried in a passionate burst of words. "I'm a sick man; my heart's been acting up. That accursed Jew told the truth. Somebody get me a doctor! Give up the whole thing. I tricked Pertinax into signing that confession. He didn't know what he was doing."

The skipper struggled to his feet. They stared at him, alarmed by his ghastly aspect.

"I confess the whole thing," he groaned bitterly. "Go shoulder your own blame, Ariston. That Jew has cursed me; I'm a dead man, I tell you. Clear out, and send me a doctor! Dismiss the charges, all of 'em—"

He stumbled away into his own cabin and slammed the door. The officers of the *Diana* exchanged startled glances. Then Captain Ariston shrugged.

"All right, lads; come along. We were damned fools to try and shift the blame. We'll withdraw the charges and forget it."

So they went ashore, and on their way passed a boat that was bringing the two priests of Isis aboard the ship.

THESE Egyptians tried to see Stentor, but the skipper refused to admit them. For a space they talked together, angrily. Their entire scheme had come to naught because of the chief officer. The Jew mattered little, but this fellow Pertinax was dangerous.

"He's the nub of the whole business," said the older priest craftily. "This accursed skipper has lost his nerve; first thing we know, he'll set Pertinax free,

and then the fat's in the fire. But we can still save the day. For our own sake, we must do it. Stentor undertook to get rid of him—and failed. But we will not fail!"

So the two priests of Isis came to their decision. One thing was sure in this world of uncertainty—a dead man can bear all blame, can carry anything charged against him, without any chance of back-talk.

One of the two priests went to the guard at the door of the chief officer's cabin, and fell into talk with that man. After a time the seaman stood stiff and wooden, like a man dead. Then the other priest came. They unbarred the cabin door and walked in.

PERTINAX, loosely chained, came to his feet at sight of them. Their glittering eyes, their tensed, sweating features, gave him warning enough.

As one of the two began to lay a spell upon him, Pertinax knew that in another moment he would be hypnotized and helpless, as before. He flung himself furiously upon the two priests. Their knives flashed out; they took him between them.

But they dealt with no man bemused and wandering of wit. Joe Pertinax had seen knife-work in many a waterfront brawl. He tripped up one of the priests; he caught the other's knife-arm between his chained wrists. Reeling, staggering in a frantic death-grapple, the two antagonists stumbled across the priest who had fallen.

The Egyptian held in Pertinax's grip shrieked out—the knife of the fallen priest had gone up through his back, as he went down. But the tripped priest, writhing clear, snatched up the weapon of the dying man.

He flung himself on Pertinax and bore the chief officer back. The knife rose and fell, but missed its aim.

And as it missed, Pertinax caught the brown wrist in his two chained hands.

They clung, thus, for a long and desperate moment, face to sweating face. Suddenly Joe Pertinax brought up one chained leg. He whipped it clear over the head of the Egyptian, and then flung forth all his strength. His leg bent back the brown torso; his hands gripped the other man's wrist; their straining bodies were tangled like those of two intertwined snakes.

In this frightful wrench which half tore him apart, the Egyptian loosed the

knife. Next instant Pertinax had the blade, and shoved it home, up into the brown straining throat.

It was then they came rushing in upon him, Demetrius and the others; and it was thus they found him. Captain Stentor had sent for him; the skipper was dying. They struck off his chains, and all bloody as he was, hurried him to the Captain's cabin.

"You—you're acting master, Joe," gasped the dying man, clutching at his heart. "I'm done for. Something gave way, here. I've confessed. Forgive me, lad—forgive me!"

"Aye," said Pertinax.

IN the cold, clear sunlight of morning, Pertinax sat ashore talking with Lydia and her father Publius. Word had just come that the two men gravely hurt in the riot were recovering.

"Paul went to see them," said the girl, radiant, wide-eyed. "He put his hand on them and healed them, as he did you, Father. They confessed that my brother gave them money to start that riot and to kill Joe, here."

The magistrate's head was bent in chagrin and sorrow.

"Pertinax, you must prefer charges against my son. He conspired with Stentor and with those Egyptians. It is your duty and mine to see that he is duly punished."

Joe Pertinax shook his head, thoughtfully.

"Nope. Remember telling me what that Jew said in court—the vast silence of the sea is like the patience of God? You know, there's a lot of truth in that. Any seaman can appreciate it. There's something terrible and mystical in the silence of the sea. I wonder how a Jew came to think of such a thing?"

Then he roused, and broke into a whimsical smile.

"Forget the charges," he said. "Those against the Jew have collapsed. I'm in the clear myself. I don't want any punishing. You know, I'm hanged if I can see what to make of this whole business! If Paul has done these things, then he's some god. I just don't believe the yarns about him. They're too tall for me to swallow."

The girl was staring past him. Publius rose.

Joe Pertinax looked around and hastily started to his feet. The gaunt Jew was standing in the doorway, regarding them.

Another fine story in this exceptional series will appear in our forthcoming December issue.

"Well, it's a fact. Since you heard me, I stick to it," blurted out Pertinax. "Come, be honest! You can't expect me to believe this nonsense. Either you're some kind of a god, or else you're not."

Paul looked at him for a moment, with a slow smile.

"In your present state of mind, young man, I can't expect you to show much sense at all," he said dryly. "And considering the cause, I don't particularly blame you, either; I was once young myself, strange as it may seem. —Publius, I want to talk with you! Come along, and give these young folks a chance to readjust the world as they'd have it."

The two departed.

Joe Pertinax gazed after them; then he swung around to Lydia.

"Well, can you beat that! Mind-reader, that's what he is. There's something about him that gets you."

"Then you do believe in him, Joe?"

"Upon my word, Lydia—whether I believe all the yarn or not, Rome certainly wouldn't believe it. Suppose we talk it over. We have a good three months in which to discuss it."

She smiled quickly, reading his eyes. "You do! In your heart, you know the truth—and you just won't admit it!"

Pertinax started to speak, only to check himself, as the voice of the gaunt Jew drifted to them from somewhere outside.

"Truth," it said, "is from heaven."

"There's your answer," Pertinax said softly, and touched the arm of the girl. "Your answer, Lydia, and mine. And now I'd better get that report on the *Diana* drawn up before—well, before I get to believing too much!"

LONG centuries later, the report was exhumed, along with a mass of other documents from the Corn Line offices. It was brief:

The Diana, lost by hurricane off Malta, is a total loss. Due to seamanship of master and pilot, the crew and passengers all saved. Investigation shows no blame attached.

*J. Pertinax, Acting Master
Castor and Pollux.*

But of the winter months in Malta, ere the great corn ship set forth for Rome, of the bride who sailed in her, of the gaunt prisoner and the centurion who escorted him—these things are to be sought elsewhere, and the tale thereof.

*The moving drama of a
very gallant gentleman who
was also an able actor.*

Illustrated by
Arthur Jameson

By KURT
STEEL



Curtain Call

NO one in Deepford City could say where Doe had come from, least of all, of course, Doe himself.

One spring morning when the sap was beginning to run in the maples along the Avenue, he appeared at Judge Charley's back door, tall, stooped, shabby, his thick shock of hair almost white, his beautiful hands fingering the brim of a once modish black hat. Judge Charley told him there was kindling to chop, and looked critically at the shabby old man's beautiful hands.

"I will be in your debt, sir," Doe said simply in a voice as beautiful as his gesturing hands.

Judge Charley, despite his rotund and youthful scapegrace appearance, comes by his high office honorably, both his father and grandfather having preceded him. He had practiced in Deepford County only two years after coming home from law-school, when his father and mother were killed at the Romine crossing. Then, being easily the most popular citizen in Deepford City and having, as you might say, inherited the judicial toga, he was elected the next fall to fill his father's place.

Charley told me about Doe when I met him in the post office that spring forenoon. When he described the forlorn old man, I realized I had seen him about town, and I was curious.

"Then come out to lunch with me," Charley said. "Maybe you can do something for him."

Mary, the housekeeper, told us that the stranger was out in the woodshed.

"Wanted to sharpen the ax when he got done. Then he said he'd fix the door on the barn. Thought it wouldn't do any harm to give him his meal for that," she said brusquely.

Charley sent for him, and Doe came into the room where we sat. His magnificent hair was neatly combed, his fine hands no longer nervous. There was in his gestures, in the way he held his head and straightened his stooped shoulders, an air of gentle breeding, as if this time he were meeting Charley on common ground, an elderly gentleman calling on a young.

"My name," Charley told him, "is Minter. This is Doctor Reeves."

"I regret," the stranger said, his soft voice tinged with melancholy, "that I

cannot tell you my name." Then, lest we misunderstand, "Unfortunately, I cannot remember what my name is."

When Charley asked him sympathetically what he *could* remember, the stranger smiled and said, "Kindnesses, sir."

Charley christened him Doe. Not John Doe. "That, sir," Doe agreed smiling, "would be presuming too greatly on the good nature of many unsung heroes." He accepted the monosyllabic name with gentle gravity.

In the spring and summer that followed, Doe entered smoothly into the routine of the gabled house on Cantrell Avenue. Under his ministering hands the garden flourished, broken hinges once more swung true, palings appeared in the holes in the orchard fence, the fence was painted, and the straggling apple trees pruned. And at night when the cheerful, suds-dampened clatter of supper dishes came from the kitchen and the fast mail whistled low and shrill across the level miles and the martens creaked in long swooping flights through the dusk, Judge Charley and Doe would sit on the wide front veranda and talk.

IT was on Labor Day that Lop Kilian picked the lock on his cell in the county jail, stuck a fountain pen in the sheriff's back, marched him into a cell, and drove off hell-bent in the sheriff's car.

Eight months before, Lop Kilian and his pal Finger Haney had done the same thing, except that that time they used a gun instead of a fountain pen and shot Turnkey Will Shore dead as they escaped. They had been caught and brought back. Because the State's Attorney had political ambitions that called for as much evidence of his oratory as possible, Haney and Kilian were given separate trials. Haney's trial had been completed the week before, and Judge Charley was still being congratulated on his handling of it when Kilian broke jail on Labor Day.

Kilian's escape was all over town in an hour and it was all over the country in two.

Reporters and special writers flocked into Deepford City to bait the sheriff between trains, and with the childish inconsequence of their kind, found in Judge Charley's cheerful rotundity subject for a fresh angle of ridicule. The news-reel men got a few feet of film of Charley rising wrathfully from the bench to flash out at the smirking news-writers;

film-editors dubbed in sound effects and a derisive monologue wherewith a commentator might evoke titters in a thousand motion-picture houses.

For the next two days Judge Charley went about tight-lipped, his ruddy, jovial face showing strained lines, his eyes sharp with sleeplessness.

The third night we sat in the sheriff's office where local headquarters for the county posses had been set up. There was an atmosphere of futility in the room. Lop Kilian being just then one of the country's prime public enemies, the man-hunt was principally the property of Federal men, and they were making the most of it.

About eleven o'clock Judge Charley and I left the sheriff's office and went home. Preoccupied, Charley followed his usual habit pattern and coasted the last block and into the Minter drive with his motor off. It was a heavy humid night, soundless as we got out of the car and walked to the back door.

But just as we entered the kitchen we heard voices in the front part of the house. I felt Charley stiffen in the dark beside me.

He pushed on ahead of me, and we went silently through the kitchen and dining room and on into the hall. The door to Charley's study stood ajar, a yellow streak of light slanting across the hallway. One man was speaking now, and we could understand his words. It was Doe.

"In another moment," Doe was saying quietly, "you will kill me with that gun, but what will it profit you?"

Some one in the study growled, "I told you, you—"

Then in a stiff, unreal instant Charley stood in the study door and I was looking over his shoulder.

In the wing chair at the side of the fireplace sat Doe, his gentle face serene, one hand raised in a gesture.

Opposite him, near an open window, crouched the man whose face I recognized from the photographs which had scowled from the dailies since Labor Day. In Kilian's hand was a revolver, and in his little eyes was murder—murder and something else you see in certain hospital wards.

FOR a wild, pounding moment we stood there. Then Doe spoke, his voice equable:

"Come in. —My son," he said to Kilian simply, serenely, as if introducing



two friends. "Mr. Kilian," he explained to us, "has come to see me on a small matter of business."

Kilian snarled, "Listen, Fatty! This is your old man's funeral, not yours. Get in here and reach—high."

We walked into the room.

"I come to see the Judge," Kilian went on while the cocaine burned in his little eyes. "I come to see the Judge and have it out wit' him for what he done to my pal Haney. I promised Haney I'd square—"

"I'm Judge Minter," Charley interrupted, his round face white, and his arms raised.

Lop Kilian looked at him hard; then he sneered:

"Can it. Can it! Sit down, punk, while—"

"The administration of justice," Doe said in a firm voice, "requires that one undertake certain hazards. And those hazards a judge undertakes gladly. My son would like to make you believe that he, and not myself, is the judge. But, sir, does he appear to be of the judicial cast? I ask you, if you were called on to identify the jurist in this room, would you—"

The roar of the gun was still beating the walls of the room when some one hurtled past my shoulder and landed with a mighty crash on Lop Kilian.

Charley smashed a vase on Kilian's head before I could reach them. He sprang from the limp gunman to the old man in the wing chair.

Doe had slumped forward, but as Charley caught him and drew him gently back we saw that his serene face was smiling, and his lips were moving.

We could catch the words, sighed almost happily:

*"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot. . . ."*

He paused, and again we heard great lines breathed faintly as by one who loved them much: "*And by a sleep to say we end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks.*" Then a phrase from the prison scene in "*Lear*," and something I recognized as Sheridan—then a brief line from Molière.

Doe's eyes opened wide once. He lifted one fine veined hand, said distinctly:

"My cue."

The hand fell. . . .

The white stone on the greenning grave says simply:

DAVID GARRICK DOE

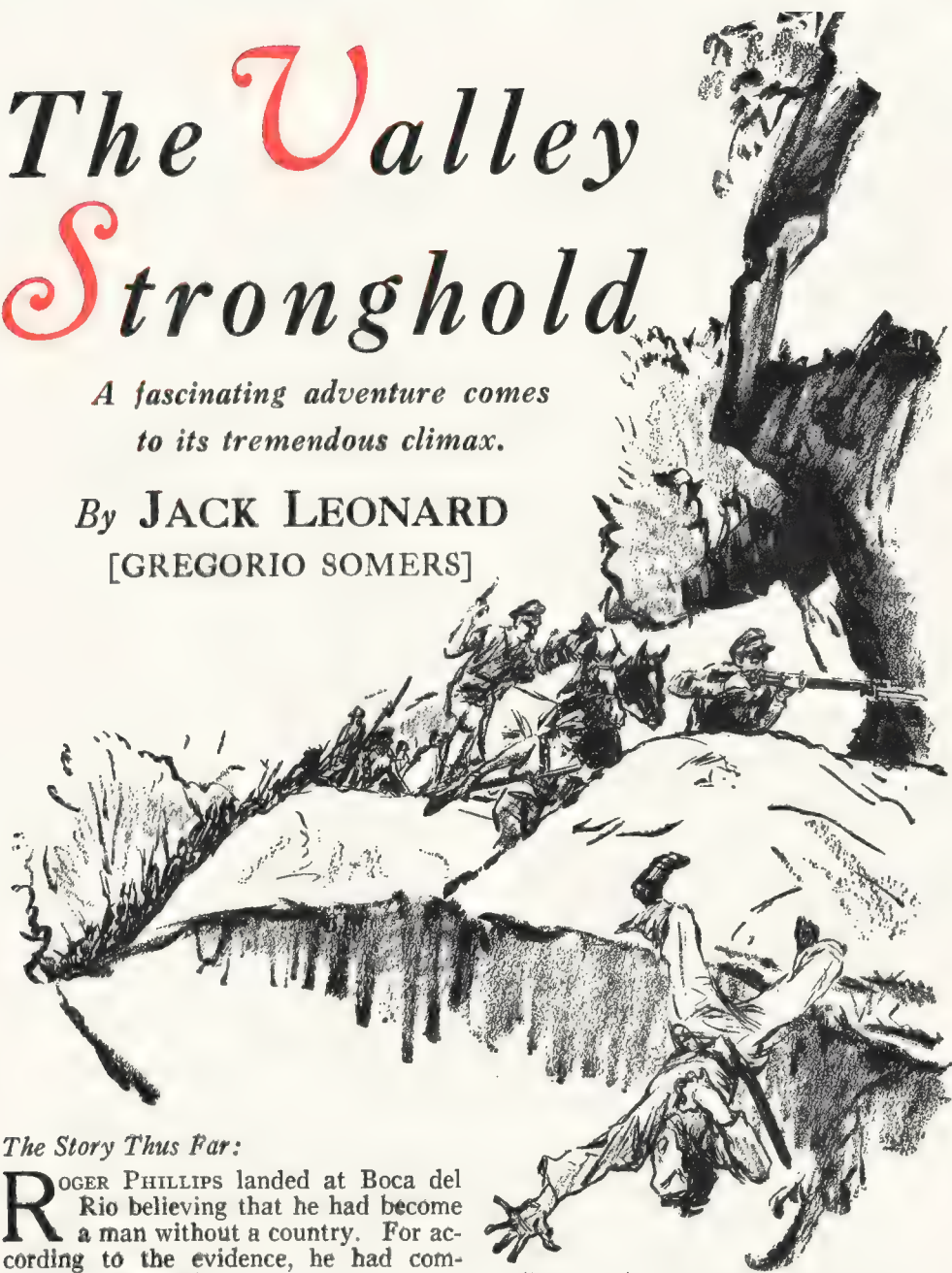
Died September 8, 1936

A Noble Actor in his Noblest Rôle.

The Valley Stronghold

*A fascinating adventure comes
to its tremendous climax.*

By JACK LEONARD
[GREGORIO SOMERS]



The Story Thus Far:

ROGER PHILLIPS landed at Boca del Rio believing that he had become a man without a country. For according to the evidence, he had committed a dreadful crime, and in desperation had fled to this remote place, whence extradition could be avoided.

With him landed a girl; when her own people failed to meet her at the dock, she turned to him in her distress—which presently became her danger. For she was the daughter of the Torreons, just returned from completing her education in the United States. And the Torreons were the old Spanish family who held an interior mountain valley as feudal lords over several thousand of the native Indians, and defied the corrupting inroads of so-called civilization.

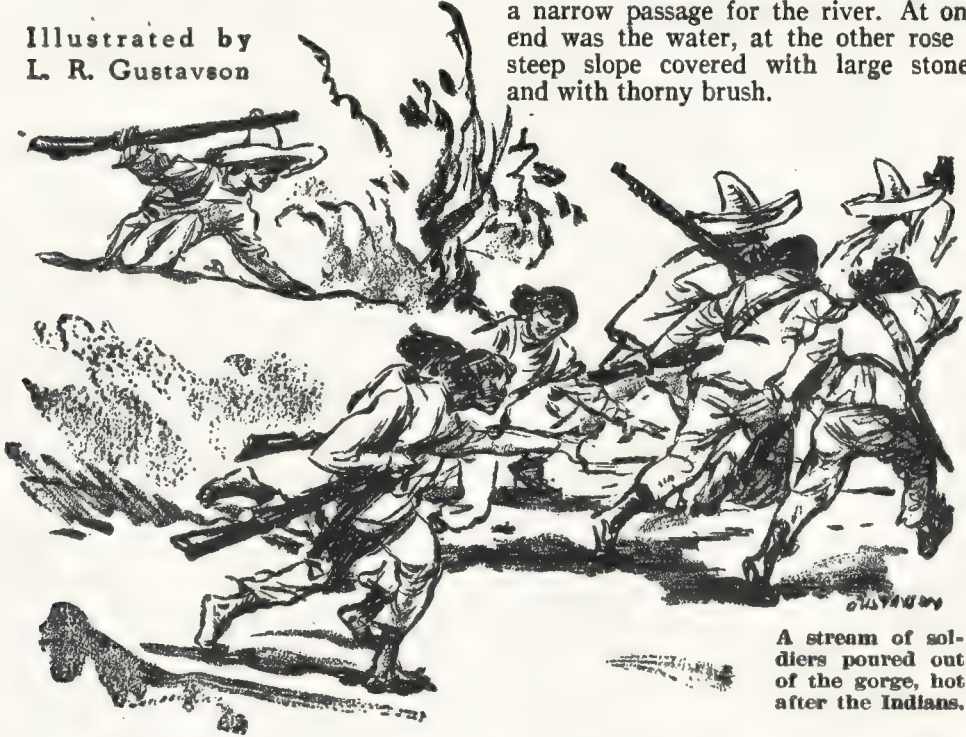
The local commandant tried to take Lucha under his protection—really to hold her as hostage to force her family to terms. Roger fled with her and held the enemy at bay until a party of the Torreons' Indians, headed by Carlos and Rodrigo Torreón, arrived; later, with a captured machine-gun he fought a rear-guard action to enable the rescue-party to escape to the valley. Here they met Ignacio (the foster son of Don Hernando Torreón) to whom Lucha was engaged.

Ignacio likewise had been to the United States for his education, and had recently returned—much changed, appar-

ently. For presently it developed that he planned to betray the Torreons and the rich mineral lands of their valley to their enemies. And he tried to discredit Roger by producing an American newspaper with a picture of Roger as an alleged murderer. Failing in this, Ignacio stirred up a revolt among the Indians and made off with the only machine-gun in the valley. Open war had been declared. *(The story continues in detail:)*

CARLOS and Rodrigo kissed their wives good-by. Then they mounted their horses. Roger saw Pablo pointing to a saddled horse a few yards away. He ran across and leaped into the saddle. With a wild burst of shouting the troop started off across the flat valley floor.

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson



A stream of soldiers poured out of the gorge, hot after the Indians.

"Good-by, Lucha," called Roger from the edge of the grove. "I'll be back soon."

"And I'll be waiting," she answered.

He saw her turn quickly and run into the house to hide her tears.

Wheeling his horse, Roger rode into the dense cloud of dust which hung like a smoke-screen above the road. He could see nothing. He choked and closed his eyes part way. Soon the dust began to thin. He saw the bobbing straw hats of the Indian horsemen, then their white shirts. He heard all around him the thud of hoofs, cries, the creak of leather.

All at once the cloud cleared, dropped to a lower level. Roger smiled. It had been like a theater curtain, that dust, dividing two acts of his life. Behind lay a tangle of complex motives, regrets, intrigue, doubt and misgiving. Ahead lay nothing but action—clear, dangerous action, blessedly simple.

He pushed to the head of the troop, where Don Rodrigo was riding with Pablo. They were following up the main stream of the river, which led across the flat plain, winding and twisting until it disappeared at last into a small steep-banked ravine. Just inside the mouth was something Roger had never noticed before—a low stone building without windows or doors, which reached two-thirds of the way across the ravine, leaving only a narrow passage for the river. At one end was the water, at the other rose a steep slope covered with large stones and with thorny brush.

"It's going to be tough," he thought, "to take that place without artillery. Ignacio's smart. He knew where to go."

They approached the fort at a gallop. There was practically no cover, only close-cropped pasture-land with tufts of grass never more than eighteen inches high. The fort itself was built of great rectangular stone blocks as solid as the living rock. Roger could see a few narrow loopholes in the wall. Several white specks were moving along the top. He wondered if one were Ignacio.

About half a mile from the fort, Rodrigo reined up suddenly.

"That is the old fort," he said to Roger.

"An easy place to defend."

"Yes, very easy. And we haven't time to starve them out."

"What are you going to do?"

"Attack. What else? We can't have that machine-gun behind us when General Marso comes."

"I should say not. Have they got all the ammunition?"

"Every bit. We've got to make them fire it all before we can take the fort."

"Wait a minute," cried Roger. "We mustn't do that. We've got to capture the gun, and the shells too."

Rodrigo shrugged. "You're very hopeful, my friend," he said. "I'll thank the Holy Virgin if we take the fort at all."

Roger looked across the level plain. The fort was somewhat less than half a mile away. He couldn't see very much about its construction, and he didn't want to go much closer lest the defenders be tempted to fire the gun and waste the precious ammunition.

"Tell me more about the fort, Rodrigo," he said. "I've never been near it."

"There are two thick walls about ten yards apart. On top of each wall is a place where men can stand and shoot through loopholes. Between the walls are three buildings with stone roofs, very strong. We used to store food there, so we could stand a siege if we had to."

"Anything in them now?"

"Nothing. The food got spoiled by floods," said Rodrigo. "For sometimes—not every year—it rains very hard in the mountains. The river rises so high the water can't pass the fort. It makes a lake and floods the space between the walls."

Roger glanced down at the river beside the trail. It was flowing fast and clear, forty feet wide. He looked at Rodrigo.

For a moment the older man was silent. Then he smiled.

"Magnificent," he cried, his black eyes gleaming. "We can do it. You're a strategist, my friend."

"You thought of it too, as soon as I did. But let's get busy. No telling how soon we'll want to use the gun."

CHAPTER V

RODRIGO singled out two of the mounted Indians who were sitting their horses a few yards away.

"Emiliano, Gustavo," he said, "listen carefully. I have many orders to give.

You must not forget a single one of them."

The Indians nodded gravely.

"Go to Don Hernando. Tell him to send us every old man, every woman, and every boy who is strong enough to work in the fields. We shall need at least a thousand. Send every shovel, every mattock, every ax. Send baskets, ropes of all sizes. Send torches and food. Now repeat what I've told you."

One of the Indians repeated the order word for word, missing not a single item.

"I'd like to tell Don Hernando what we're going to do," said Rodrigo to Roger, "but I don't dare speak it or write it. These two men are loyal, but there may be traitors at the other end."

"Wait a minute. Don Hernando can read English."

Roger searched in his trousers' pocket and found a pencil stub. With an ironic smile he took out his letter of recommendation to General Marso and wrote a few words on the face of the envelope. "*We are going to build a dam above the fort.*" He put the letter back in his pocket and handed the envelope to one of the Indians. They spurred their horses and galloped away.

"Here come the rest of our men," said Rodrigo. "We'll surround the fort."

A QUARTER-MILE down the road were the first of the armed Indians, more than two hundred, trotting afoot in their dusty sandals. Don Rodrigo met each group, deploying them out in a great semicircle around the mouth of the ravine. The men lay down on the ground, taking what cover there was, watching the gray wall of the fort. He placed the horsemen in the center, ready to charge in any direction at a moment's notice. Then he glanced up at the sun.

"It will be dark in two hours," he said. "You'd better go up above the fort so you can see the country by daylight. Pablo will show you the way, and some of the armed men will go with you. I'll follow later with the diggers and the tools."

"Right," said Roger. "Let's go, Pablo."

He cantered off with the young Indian toward the mountain slope to the west of the fort. Behind them came a score of riflemen on foot.

"It's a path for goats," said Pablo, "but I know it well. When I was a boy, I spent my life with the goats."

They left their horses on the edge of the level ground and clambered up a

steep brushy slope littered with blocks of broken rock. After about fifteen minutes of climbing they came over the ridge which separated the main valley from the upper reaches of the river.

Roger looked down and studied the lay of the land. Below ran the river, flowing in shadow through a narrow, twisting valley, sometimes hardly wider at the bottom than the stream itself.

"There's the place," he cried. "It's perfect."

He pointed to where the valley narrowed suddenly. Below the gap the stream broke over a stretch of white rapids; but above, it flowed calm and deep across a level meadow bordered by tall straight trees.

"Well," thought Roger to himself, "it looks as if the Lord were fighting on the side of the Torreons. I never saw a better place for a dam. A ten-foot rise will back the water up for half a mile."

When the armed Indians came over the ridge, Roger led them down to the river and stationed them just below the narrow gap with instructions to watch for scouts from the fort. Then he made a careful, detailed survey of the gap itself, racing with the gathering darkness. The valley was about fifty yards wide at its narrowest point, which lay just above the rapids. The banks were steep clay on both sides, sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees. The stream itself was ten yards wide and about three feet deep before it hit the rapids, and the current was not particularly strong.

"Easy as rolling off a log," thought Roger.

He lit one of his few remaining cigarettes and sat down on a grassy bank to wait for Rodrigo with the diggers and the tools. Pablo sat beside him, shy and silent as usual, but alert with his rifle across his knees. The sun had set. Its orange glow grew dim behind the mountains, turning to dull red, then to purple.

"It's been a pretty busy day," thought Roger, "and I guess it's going to be a busy night."

HE lay back against the bank and tried to think—to arrange in an orderly pattern the events of the day: It was quite evident that Ignacio had been plotting with General Marso for a long time. Otherwise he would never have met Joe Petrucci, the New York gun-runner. Also he must have discovered the silver mine before he left for the United States. Perhaps Don Hernando had showed it to

him and pledged him to develop the mine for the benefit of the Indians, as he himself would have done.

"Just let *me* get a chance," thought Roger. "I'll make the valley a model for the whole damned world."

He drifted off into wonderful dreams of how he and Lucha would develop the mine together. They'd sell only a little ore at first, shipping it secretly and buying arms with the proceeds—gradually gaining power, making peace with the distant President over the mountains, importing machines, bringing doctors, teachers. Training the Indians to be their own engineers. Bringing to the valley only the good of civilization, warding off the evil. Fulfilling to its last clause the promise of Rodolfo Torreón four hundred years ago.

IT was a marvelous dream—but Roger shrugged hopelessly.

"I'm a hell of a guy to do it. I'll get arrested the minute I stick my head out of this valley. Joe Petrucci will squeal on me if no one else does. Then the New York cops will pick me up."

He sat upright again and set his jaw hard.

"Well, anyway," he said to himself, "I can fight *this* fight. No one can stop me from fixing Ignacio. Then we'll see."

Pablo touched his elbow and pointed upward.

"Look," he said. "They are coming with torches."

High on the ridge above a spark of yellow light was flickering faintly. Then another appeared, and many more. Roger watched while the sparks came nearer, descending the slope. Then he got up and went to meet his reinforcements.

Rodrigo was in the lead with an Indian who carried a flaming torch in one hand and a rifle in the other. Behind came a lengthy line of white-clad figures with shovels, axes, ropes, bags, torch-wood and baskets. Half were old men and boys; the rest were sturdy women in their working-clothes.

"Fine," cried Roger. "You got here quicker than I expected."

Rodrigo shook his head. "I've got bad news."

"What's the matter?"

"They've taken the outer gate."

"Who?" demanded Roger. "General Marso?"

"No, Ignacio's men. They must have planned it all in advance."

"The outer gate?"

In short, bitter sentences, Rodrigo told the story. Carlos had started for the pass not far behind a group of Ignacio's partisans. When he got to the inner gate, between the "vestibule" and the main valley, he found it barred against him. There must have been treachery, for he hadn't heard a shot fired.

He attacked at once. The inner gate was hard to defend from the valley side, and he took it without much difficulty. The traitors retreated across the "vestibule" to the outer cañon, where they erected a barricade and repelled all attacks. Shots had been heard from down the gorge; then silence, so now the outer gate itself must be in the hands of the enemy.

"That is very bad," said Rodrigo. "The outer gate is the strongest. When General Marso arrives, he can occupy the vestibule without trouble. And the vestibule is almost the valley itself."

"We've got to get that machine-gun," cried Roger. "We need it. Have you surrounded the fort?"

"Yes. There are scouts right under the walls, and more on the hills above. Ignacio's bottled up. I think he'll stay in the fort and let the General do the fighting."

"Not if we can help it. We need the gun too bad. Let's get busy on the dam."

Rodrigo led forward a middle-aged Indian.

"This is Enrique," he said. "He's had charge of all the roads and bridges in the valley. You'll find he knows his business."

"Let's get going," cried Roger. "We haven't a minute to lose."

He took Enrique to the river-bank and began explaining his plans in detail. The Indian listened carefully, making a few excellent suggestions of his own. Then he turned to his people and began shouting orders in their own language.

Roger never forgot the scene which followed. He watched with admiration while the Indians fell to work. There was no confusion, almost no noise. The smallest boys lit torches and fires on both sides of the river until the whole little valley was full of dancing yellow flames. The women took shovels and mattocks, attacking the nearest bank, loading the earth into wicker baskets. Another gang waded across the river to start the same job on the other side. Gradually two earthen moles grew out from the steep slopes toward the water.

The men were busy with axes on the edge of the forest. Trees crashed to the ground and were trimmed and cut to size by scores of willing hands.

Now Roger's task began. He waded out into the water with Enrique and some of the strongest men. As the logs arrived he set them upright in the bed of the stream, braced with stout poles. Soon a sort of stockade extended across the river, composed of twenty posts fifteen feet tall and eighteen inches apart, the water flowing easily between them.

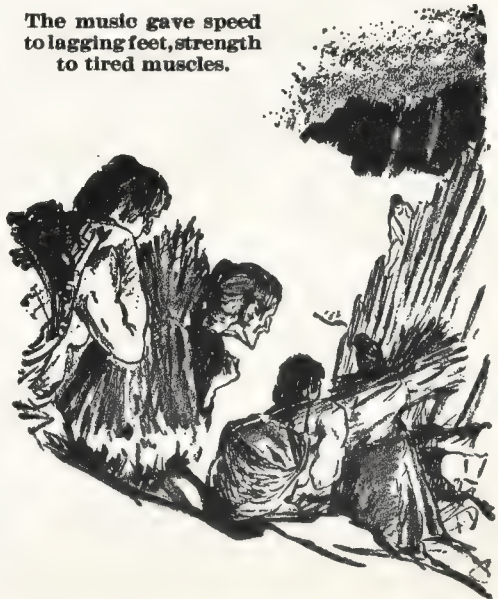
For an hour Roger was too busy directing the work to pay attention to anything else, but after the posts were all in position, his mind relaxed sufficiently to notice the sound of music from the bank. He looked in that direction. Beside a blazing fire sat a group of Indian girls in brilliant holiday dress, guitars on their knees. They were singing a curious, plaintive, primitive song.

Roger stood still for a moment to listen. The music was soft, but it seemed to fill the whole valley, keeping time with the ring of the axes, the thud of the mattocks, with the rhythm of the work. It gave speed to lagging feet, strength to tired muscles.

The song went on. Just as Roger was about to turn away, he happened to notice a particular girl. She wore the Indian costume, but her face was white, not brown. He looked again. The girl was Lucha, sitting among the others.

"Lucha," he cried. "What are you doing here?"

The music gave speed to lagging feet, strength to tired muscles.



He struggled through the knee-deep water and ran up the bank toward the fire. The music stopped.

Lucha smiled gayly. She was dressed like the Indian girls in a full white skirt and a tight bodice bright with embroidered flowers in many brilliant colors.

"Why not? I can't work on the dam. I'm not strong enough. So I've come with the little girls. They're here to sing and encourage their people. It's a custom of theirs."

"But Lucha—it's too dangerous. You ought to be home."

But Roger was vastly pleased, despite his instinctive disapproval.

"Go back to work," said Lucha. "You're embarrassing my chorus. But I've brought supper for you and Uncle Rodrigo. Come and get it whenever you can."

Roger smiled and waded back into the water. The song struck up again, filling the valley with its curious and plaintive rhythm, binding the workers together, speeding their steps.

"What a girl!" he thought. "And I've only known her two days."

Now came the critical, difficult part of the work. It would have been comparatively easy to build a permanent, mas-

sive dam, but that wasn't Roger's purpose. A few sticks of dynamite would have solved the problem, of course, but the nearest dynamite was over the mountains in Boca del Rio.

So he did the next best. On the upstream side of the stockade he lashed four long horizontal trunks, spaced in such a way that the bulk of the water passed between the lowest two. It wasn't easy. He had no crane, no hoist, not even a block-and-tackle—nothing but ropes and poles and dozens of strong brown hands. The job took more than an hour, but when it was done, a sort of open grid stood upright in the stream, forty feet long, fifteen feet high. Then to the top of each upright post he lashed a long slanting brace firmly embedded in the gravel downstream to take the pressure of the rising water on the grid.

CAREFULLY Roger inspected the framework. It was crude-appearing but very rigid, although supported downstream only by the slanting braces.

"I hope I'm right," he muttered under his breath. "It's the best I can do."

He explained the next step to Enrique, who nodded approval. Quickly three more horizontal logs were lashed in place, filling the gaps between the other four. Then came bundles of brush, loads of coarse grass from the meadow. Gradually the water ceased to flow and began to back up in the channel.

Roger went back to the bank and Enrique took charge, shouting brief orders in his own language from a vantage-point on one of the earth embankments. All the Indians were working now with baskets and spades, trooping out in long files, dumping dirt and gravel above the grid, trotting back for another load. Slowly the earthen dam grew out from both sides and finally met in the middle. By the flickering firelight Roger could see the water begin to rise in a black placid pool, spreading over the edge of the little meadow. The dam was hardly leaking at all. He knew his task was done.

"Magnificent," said a voice behind him.

It was Rodrigo returning with Pablo from a scouting trip down the ravine.

"We went all the way to the fort," he continued. "Ignacio is staying inside. While we were coming back, the river stopped running. Magnificent!"

"I didn't do much. That fellow Enrique's a wonder, and the Indians certainly know how to work together."



"They have to," said Rodrigo simply. "They've nothing but their hands to work with, no great machines as strong as a thousand men."

"Lucha's got some supper. Let's go get it. I could eat a horse."

They went over to the fire, where Lucha was waiting beside a big covered basket.

"Supper is served," she cried gayly. "There's plenty for all four of us."

They sat down in a circle, Roger facing the river so he could watch the rising water and the growing dam. Pablo was shy at first, fingering the lock of his rifle and pretending not to notice the food, but Lucha soon had him at ease.

IT was a strangely peaceful interlude, that midnight picnic. From where he sat Roger could see the long files of Indians, trotting back and forth with their loaded baskets of earth, the fires flaming high, the water rising slowly—an ominous pool of violent power held in check. He shuddered in spite of himself. A mile away and a thousand feet below, lay the fort. Ignacio was waiting there. He must have noticed by this time that the river had run dry.

"God!" Roger exclaimed. "What a thing to do! But we've got to do it."

He felt a soft touch on his arm. Lucha was close beside him. Suddenly she flung her arms around his neck, and buried her face in his sleeve.

"Don't cry, Lucha dear," he said in English. "There's no other way."

"I feel so wicked," she sobbed. "It's been fun, this evening, watching you build the dam, bringing your supper, singing while you work. I didn't remember what we're doing it for."

"Try not to think about it, Lucha. I hope we'll never have to do a thing like this again."

He pointed down at the dam, which was six feet high by this time.

"Look, darling," he said softly. "Sometime we'll build another dam here, of concrete and steel. It will yield enough power for the mine and all the villages. Think of that!"

"I can't think of anything but Ignacio. We used to play together when we were little children. I liked him then. Promise you won't kill him, Roger."

Roger shook his head.

"I won't kill him," he promised, "but I don't know what your father will do."

Neither Rodrigo nor Pablo understood the English words, but they must have

sensed the meaning, for they sat silent with serious faces. Then Rodrigo began to smile.

"I want to tell you something, Don Roger," he said with a twinkle in his black eyes. "Day before yesterday, when we were riding up through the pass, I saw you and Lucha look at one another, and I knew there was love between you. I was glad, because I didn't like Ignacio, and I didn't want him to marry Lucha."

Roger felt the girl's soft arms tighten a little around his neck.

"And then I said a little prayer," continued Rodrigo. "I thanked the Lord God for sending you here to our valley. Lucha needed you. Don Hernando needed you, and the rest of us too. There was trouble coming, but the Lord watches over our valley. He sent you here to turn it away."

Roger was silent. He was thinking of the tabloid newspaper posted on the palm in front of the house of the Torreons. No, he thought, it wasn't God who sent him here!

Rodrigo reached out and rested his hand on Roger's shoulder.

"You had to leave your own country," he said, "but that is nothing. Don't think we believe what the newspaper said about you. We know the kind of man you are."

Pablo hadn't said a word, but now he looked up from his seat by the fire, his round, dark face serious and solemn.

"You come from a country very far away," said the Indian simply, "but you are just like a real Torreón. My father thinks so too. We all want you to marry the Señorita Lucha and rule over the valley when Don Hernando is gone."

"Thank you," said Roger. He didn't dare look at Lucha. "But General Marso is coming. Perhaps we'll all be dead tomorrow. What time do you think it is, Rodrigo?"

"Long after midnight. The dawn will come in three hours."

"I'd better get busy, I guess."

ROGER went down to the river and found Enrique, who was still directing the work. They went up on the dam with half a dozen helpers and tied stout cables to the ends of the slanting trunks which braced the framework. There were twenty of these supports, lashed against the tops of the uprights with small rope.

The plan was simple. At the signal to open the dam several men would walk

across with axes, cutting the ropes and running to safety. If the braces didn't fall of their own accord, they'd be pulled free by cables from the shore. The frame would topple like a barn door. The loose earth above it would wash away, and the whole great body of water would roar like an avalanche down the steep ravine, carrying everything before it.

AFTER Roger made sure that Enrique understood the plan, he went back to the fire.

"Let's go," he said. "This job is done. The Indians will keep putting earth on the dam as long as the water rises. Enrique knows his business. We'd better get back to the valley."

With Pablo in advance to show the way they started over the ridge, taking most of the armed men, but leaving a few to guard the dam against a possible sally breaking through the bank around the fort. They stationed two men on the summit to relay the signal—a waving torch by night or a flag by day.

Roger took a last look down. The water was almost ten feet deep, spreading out like a great pool of ink over the meadow and into the forest far upstream.

All was quiet in the main valley. The stars were shining, and Roger could see the white, ghost-like figures of the Indian riflemen waiting in little groups before the fort. He left Lucha well guarded at a safe distance and went off with Rodrigo and Pablo to inspect the lines. The semicircle on the plain was tight and complete without a gap. Picked men were hiding among the rocks close to the fort. Everything was ready, waiting for the first light of the dawn.

They returned to Lucha. Roger was very tired. His feet were dragging like leaden blocks, and every muscle ached.

"I wish I could sleep," he said to Rodrigo.

"Why not? There'll be nothing to do for two hours unless the dam breaks, and if it does, they'll give us warning from the ridge."

"No use, I'm too nervous."

"Come here," cried Lucha imperiously. She sat down on the ground. "Lie down and put your head in my lap. I'll get you to sleep in no time."

Roger obeyed like a small child. Lucha stroked his forehead, bent over him tenderly, singing a soft little Spanish song—quiet and crooning, verse after verse of gentle words.

After a time Roger fell asleep. . . .

Two hours later he opened his eyes. He was lying on his back with his head on a pillow of cotton cloth. Lucha sat near by, and Rodrigo was standing over him.

"Dawn has come, Don Roger," he said. "Soon we shall give the signal."

Roger sat up and looked around. The stars had disappeared. The valley was full of soft gray light, and over the mountains to the east hung a flock of little bright clouds catching the glow of the rising sun. It was very quiet. He could hear the roosters crowing faintly in the nearest village a mile away.

"You slept well," said Lucha. "Just like a healthy baby. Do you feel better?"

"I feel fine."

He got to his feet, much refreshed. The rear-guard of sleep was marching out of his brain, and growing excitement was taking its place. His pulse began to throb. He looked toward the fort, whose low solid wall was just visible.

"How's it going, Rodrigo?" he demanded. "Any news from the dam?"

"They've added more earth. The water's almost up to the top. The traitors didn't try to come out of the fort."

"Fine. We'll wash them out like rats. I hope Ignacio hasn't the sense to smash the gun."

"He hasn't the courage. He'll keep it to the last minute. Then it will be too late."

"I hope you're right. Let's get going."

THE placing of the Indians Roger left to Rodrigo, who knew their customs and capabilities. He waited with Lucha while the older man gave orders, sent messengers along the line. Pablo walked over from a group of his fellows. He was carrying a flag of white cloth on a long bamboo pole.

"I've been chosen to give the signal," he said proudly. "I shall wave the flag three times. Then—Mother of God!—the water will come!"

He was much more excited than Roger had yet seen him.

"Roger," said Lucha suddenly, touching his elbow. "Roger—are you going to kill Ignacio?"

"Not if we can help it. We want to catch him alive. He can give us a lot of information."

"Tell my uncle. Please! The Indians will shoot him on sight."

"They may have to. When the water comes, there won't be time to offer terms of surrender."



"Please try, anyway. I hate him, Roger. Deep down in my heart I've always hated him—even before he went away. But now I want him to live. Go and tell my uncle."

Roger walked over to Rodrigo. The older man was doubtful.

"That will be very difficult," he said. "We've got to punish traitors. The Indians won't let the others live, and they won't spare Ignacio just because he's white. Lucha is a woman. She ought to be back at home."

"Tell them to save Ignacio so he can give us information about General Marso. They'll see that point."

"All right. I'll tell them. We're almost ready. As soon as Lucha gets out of danger, we'll give the signal."

"You tell her to go. She won't mind me."

"Her American education has made her much too reckless," said Rodrigo with a smile. "I'll send her under guard if I have to."

He got Lucha's mare and led it over to where she was standing.

"It's time for you to go back to your father," he said. "This is man's work." "Roger—" began Lucha appealingly.

She didn't finish the sentence. Pablo gave a loud shout.

"Look!" he cried, pointing up to the top of the ridge. "The flag! It's a signal!"

On the summit a small red flag was waving back and forth on a long pole. It stopped upright; then started to wave again. Rodrigo counted aloud.

"One—two—three—four," he counted in a voice rising high with excitement. "Four strokes! The dam is breaking!"

"Wave your flag, Pablo!" cried Roger. "Three times!"

That was the signal to jerk away the supports and complete the break. Pablo

waved the flag. Rodrigo ran to his horse and leaped into the saddle, shouting orders to the Indians. Shouts rang out. Horses reared and strained against their tethers.

"Stick with me, Lucha," cried Roger. "We've got to get away from the river. Where's my horse?"

Roger's horse was gone. It had broken loose from its picket and was cantering over the plain toward the nearest village.

"You beat it, Lucha. I'm all right. The water won't be here for ten minutes."

"I'm going to stay with you."

"You can't."

"Yes, I can; we'll see this through together."

Roger shrugged. After all, he reflected, there wasn't much danger. Lucha mounted her mare. Roger took hold of a stirrup, and they trotted over to a knoll of higher ground where they could watch the fort. A few white specks were moving on top of the wall.

"Lucha," he pleaded. "Please go back to the house. I ought to be doing something—not just standing here."

"I'm going to keep you here with me. You mustn't take any risks. You're the only man on our side that can shoot a machine-gun."

IT was true, Roger realized, but he felt like an arrant coward. Together they watched, Lucha sitting bolt upright in the saddle, her eyes wide, her lips slightly parted. The plain was full of movement, the Indians running in straggling waves toward the fort. They heard faint cries, and little clouds of dust were rising like puffs of smoke from the dry ground.

"How soon?" asked Lucha breathlessly. "How soon will the water come?"

"Any time now. We'll hear it before we see it."

They listened in silence. A rattle of shots rang out from the fort. More shots from the plain and a chorus of wild cries, very faint in the distance.

"Listen," whispered Roger suddenly. "The water! Do you hear it?"

"Yes I hear it," cried Lucha. "Oh, Roger! It's terrible!"

She leaped from her saddle and clung to his arm, watching the fort with fascinated eyes.

The air was full of a soft, faint, murmuring sound like the sighing of wind through the pines, or the surf of a distant sea. It seemed to come from nowhere. Slowly it grew in volume, with awful deliberation. Louder and louder it

grew—a fierce, frightening sound by now, soft no longer. It seemed to crash among the cliffs, to echo and reverberate. It wasn't at all like the sound of water, but like tumbling blocks of stone.

"Look," cried Roger. "They've seen it."

Lucha gave a little cry and covered her eyes. On top of the fort were many white figures, running frantically about, like termites on a chunk of rotten wood. Roger shuddered. He knew what they saw—a racing white wall, high like a wave, bristling with broken trees, grinding rocks, and roaring like thunder.

"LOOK!" cried Roger. "They're running away."

One by one the little white figures leaped down from the wall and landed on the gravel below. It was a drop of twenty feet. Several didn't rise again, but the rest ran madly for the nearest high ground. Shots rang out. A wave of Indians flooded down the rocky slope, shooting as they ran.

Still no sight of the coming flood, whose roar grew louder and louder until it seemed as if there couldn't be a louder sound. The river-bed beyond the fort was dry except for a small trickle in the center. The water was coming, but it hadn't struck yet.

"Look," cried Roger. "I'll bet it's Ignacio himself."

A single horseman had galloped out of the fort, crouching low in the saddle, making for the open plain. Rodrigo and his mounted Indians were a quarter of a mile away. They wheeled and galloped to cut him off.

Then, quick as a flash of lightning, the flood struck. A long white tongue of water swept through the gap, bearing on its back a tangle of splintered trees. Higher and higher it rose until it topped

the wall itself, tearing great stones from the breastworks, foaming like a waterfall many yards wide.

Roger stiffened. He was clutching Lucha's hand and watching carefully. Just ahead of the water galloped Ignacio, edging over toward the higher ground.

"My God," cried Roger. "He's got away."

It was true; the water hadn't followed the river channel, but was foaming in a blunt point far over toward the west, placing a deep impassable racing barrier between Ignacio and Rodrigo's horsemen. They couldn't cross; they couldn't cut him off. Ignacio galloped on through a hail of bullets, making straight for the little knoll where Roger and Lucha stood.

"Down," cried Roger. "He's seen us. Get down on the ground."

The girl lay down behind a small tuft of grass. Roger drew his automatic and waited. Lucha's mare had shied away. They stood alone on the knoll, the last barrier between Ignacio and the open plain.

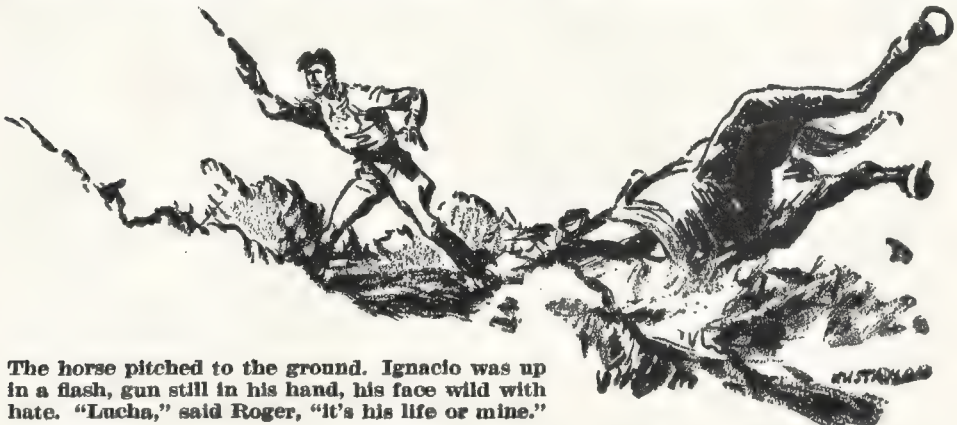
"Not so good," muttered Roger. "We ought to have thought of this."

The water was still pouring out of the gap, but it wasn't making nearly as much noise. Roger could hear the faint hoofbeats of Ignacio's horse.

"Lucha," he said, "I promised you I wouldn't kill Ignacio, but I've got to defend myself. It's his life or mine. He knows he can't escape for long. He's not trying to escape. He wants revenge."

"Oh, Roger, don't—"

Now Ignacio was only a hundred yards away. A shot rang out; a bullet clipped by Roger, who dropped to his knee and fired twice. The horse stumbled. He fired again. It pitched to the ground. Ignacio flew over its head and lit in a heap, rolling over and over. He was up in a flash, gun still in his hand, face wild



The horse pitched to the ground. Ignacio was up in a flash, gun still in his hand, his face wild with hate. "Lucha," said Roger, "It's his life or mine."

with hate. He fired twice, and bullets stirred the dust close by.

Deliberately Roger took aim. He fired once. Ignacio toppled forward, struggled, turned on his back and lay still, his face very white in the morning sun.

"Don't look, Lucha," said Roger. "Ignacio is dead."

The girl sat up. There were tears in her eyes.

"Go catch your horse," he commanded firmly, "and go back to the house. I've got to look for that machine-gun."

With a little cry she ran over and put her arms around him.

"It was horrible, Roger," she sobbed. "I know you had to do it, but—I'll go back and tell Father."

She started off to catch her mare, which was grazing peacefully a quarter of a mile away. Roger watched her go. Then he went over to where Ignacio lay. His face was very peaceful in death, despite the way he died.

"The best way out," thought Roger. "Don Hernando wouldn't have let him off alive. At least he died with his boots on. He had more nerve than I thought!"

He picked up Ignacio's hat and put it over the dead man's face. Then he set off on foot for the fort. By this time the flood was spreading out in a harmless sheet across the plain, dropping its debris in a great semicircular fan of splintery trash. The Indians were straggling back from the high ground, picking up the bodies of the dead. Don Rodrigo at the head of his troop was splashing toward Roger through the shallow water.

THE older man was full of apologies, but delighted to hear that Roger and Lucha were both unhurt.

"My fault," he admitted. "Simple stupidity."

"We were both to blame," said Roger. "Come on. Let's go look for the gun. I hope the water didn't smash it."

He mounted one of the Indians' horses and hurried toward the fort, Rodrigo following close behind. The river had almost returned to normal, so they found no difficulty riding through the gap at the end of the wall. Most of the fort had stood firm. The highest section of wall was actually dry, but the little valley above was a scene of absolute devastation—torn and wrecked, plowed and harrowed as if an enormous farm machine had passed that way. The forest was gone, leaving only a pudding-like mass of mingled wood and stone. Great

logs stuck up at sharp angles, their ends frayed out like shaving-brushes.

"I wish I'd seen it," thought Roger. "It must have been something."

HE picked his way through the wet debris to the main gate, whose heavy iron-bound door was shattered like a rotten shingle.

The interior of the fort was empty, very wet and strewn with trash and small broken branches. Roger climbed up the stone stairs to the battlements above—and gave a cry of triumph. There on its side lay the machine-gun, wet and muddy, but apparently unharmed, protected from the fury of the flood by the wall on the upstream side.

He picked it up, detached it from its tripod and carried it out to the edge of the river. He sat down calmly and took the gun to pieces, washing all the delicate parts and spreading them out in the sun to dry.

"She needs a little oil," he said to Rodrigo, "but otherwise she's O.K. Better send some of the boys upstairs for the rest of the stuff."

Three Indians trotted off to get the tripod and the cartridge drums. When they returned, Roger put the smaller parts of the gun in his hat and tied the larger parts together in a bundle with a length of rope from Rodrigo's saddle. He gave the bundle to an Indian, and took the hat under his arm.

"Let's be getting back," he said. "I'll put the gun together when we reach the house. The parts will be dry by then."

They cantered off across the wet turf. A quarter of a mile from the fort they passed the bodies of Ignacio's partisans lying in a muddy, pathetic row beside the river. Little groups of Indian women were sitting on the ground near by—wives or mothers—weeping softly.

"It wasn't a real battle," apologized Rodrigo. "They were very few and they were frightened, so they did not fight."

"There'll be plenty of real fighting," said Roger, "when the General comes."

"Yes, plenty, and more than plenty."

It was a sobering thought. They rode on, passing groups of unmounted Indians plodding back toward the big house. Many had arrived already, making quite a patch of white beneath the waving fronds of the palms. When they saw Roger, they didn't cheer or greet him. That was not their custom; they merely parted to let him pass, watching in silence with serious, worshiping eyes.

Lucha was standing in the doorway, her dark eyes shining with excitement. As soon as Roger dismounted, she ran forward with a glad cry.

"You were wonderful," she cried. "I couldn't say it before—after what happened. Not so soon. But I can say it now."

Roger looked tenderly down. He wanted to kiss her, be alone with her, tell her all his hopes, his fears and misgivings, but he saw Don Hernando standing gravely in the doorway. The old man's face was a picture of doubt and perplexity. But then a tolerant smile appeared on his lips.

"You did well, Señor Phillips," he said. "Your strategy saved many of our lives." He hesitated a moment. "I want to apologize," he continued. "I doubted you once. But now I know you didn't kill that woman. You couldn't have done it."

Roger's face fell. The stimulus of victory died away. He merely stared at Don Hernando stupidly, wishing his words were true.

"I told you so, Father," Lucha cried triumphantly. "Now you know. He's not a murderer. He *couldn't* be."

Roger kept a grateful silence, but he wished his memory weren't quite so good. He dreaded the moment when the truth should tear her faith to shreds.

Then he heard a shout behind him. Rodrigo came running out of the crowd with a couple of Indians, both of them dirty, dusty and out of breath.

"Don Roger!" he cried. "We have a message from over the mountain. General Marso is at the river. He's repairing the bridge. His army is waiting to cross. He has many machine-guns. He is coming here!"

WITH a feeling of vast relief Roger postponed his personal problems. Here was something to *do*. His guilty memories faded out. He saw only the dark, cruel face of General Marso, heard the tread of his brutal soldiers. Only one thing mattered now. *The General must not enter the valley.*

"Get me some oil," he demanded suddenly. "I want to clean the gun."

Rodrigo nodded and snapped an order. Roger looked around the circle of faces. Lucha was very pale but calm. She didn't seem a bit panic-stricken, although she knew very well what would happen if General Marso ever broke into the valley. Don Hernando was watching

Roger intently. So was Rodrigo. The Indians were gathering close, moving up through the palms, watching with their large black eyes.

No one had spoken a word, but Roger suddenly realized that something had happened. A few hours ago he'd been a stranger—fighting for the Torreons because he loved Lucha. Now he was in command. The safety of the valley depended on him. He straightened his shoulders, feeling a little overwhelmed by the weight of responsibility.

AS if from a great distance he heard the voice of Don Hernando.

"I am too old to fight," said the old man regretfully. "Carlos and Rodrigo do not understand the ways of modern war. You did very well last night, Señor Phillips. I ask you to defend the valley."

"I'll do my best," said Roger. He glanced at Lucha and saw her eyes were proud. "I don't want to take the command away from Rodrigo and Carlos," he added. "They are skillful leaders."

"We know how to obey," said Rodrigo quietly. "What are my orders?"

"Are all the Indians under arms?"

"Yes. They are all here, or at the inner gate with Carlos."

"Then tell them to start for the pass. We shall follow on horseback with the machine-gun as soon as I get it in working order."

Rodrigo gave a command. The Indians shouldered their rifles, formed into close groups around their leaders and moved off down the river toward the pass. Soon the palm grove was bare of men. Only women and children remained.

Presently a servant came out of the house with a five-gallon can half full of kerosene. Roger sent her back for a bowl and a piece of cloth. He filled the bowl with oil and washed carefully all the parts of the machine-gun, laying them out on the cloth to drain. Rodrigo watched him intently, realizing fully the importance of the task. He got up and returned in a few moments with a small bottle of oil.

"This is what I use on my own rifle," he said. "Perhaps it isn't very good, but it's the best we can buy."

Roger smelled the oil and rubbed it between his thumb and finger.

"It's excellent," he said. "I would like to teach you how to shoot this gun, Rodrigo, but we haven't got time, and we mustn't waste a single cartridge. We may need them all."

Rodrigo nodded gravely. "Yes. We have only one machine-gun. How many has the General got?"

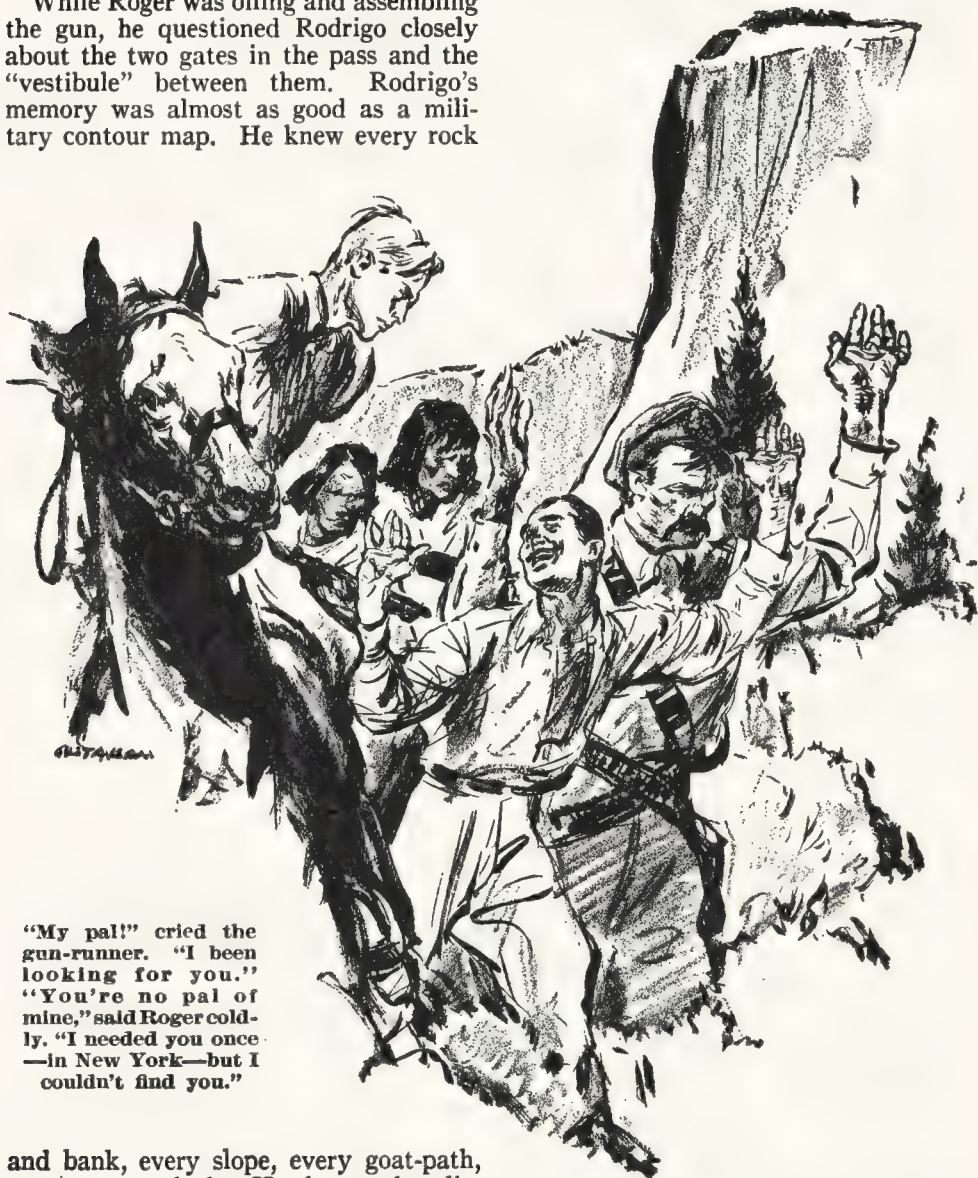
"At least ten. I know the man who sold them to him. That's why I came to Boca del Rio."

"Yes, I've been told."

While Roger was oiling and assembling the gun, he questioned Rodrigo closely about the two gates in the pass and the "vestibule" between them. Rodrigo's memory was almost as good as a military contour map. He knew every rock

likes it or not. He's got to. If he let another man lead, that man would be the general after the battle. A bandit can't afford to lose his prestige—it's all he's got, to hold his men."

"I hope you're right. Anyway we'll have to risk it."



"My pal!" cried the gun-runner. "I been looking for you." "You're no pal of mine," said Roger coldly. "I needed you once—in New York—but I couldn't find you."

and bank, every slope, every goat-path, every stream-bed. He knew the distances and relative levels. Roger had seen the "vestibule" only once, but a definite plan began to grow in his mind.

"Now tell me another thing," he said to Rodrigo. "This General, how does he fight? Does he lead his men himself, or does he like to hang off behind and let the others do the fighting?"

"He rides into battle himself," said Rodrigo with a short laugh, "whether he

In great detail he explained his plan.

"It's dangerous," he admitted when he finished, "but times have changed. Rifles and pistols can't hold this valley much longer against machine-guns. We've got to take a chance. This isn't going to be as easy as washing Ignacio out of his fort."

Rodrigo nodded gravely, turning the plan in his mind, considering each angle.

"Yes," he agreed. "The weak must use their brains."

When Roger got the machine-gun re-assembled, he attached a drum of the cartridges and fired a short, parsimonious burst out over the flat-lands. The mechanism functioned smoothly.

"Let's go," he said.

He called to the Indian horsemen, who were waiting near by, and distributed the machine-gun, the tripod, and the ammunition drums among them. Then he led the way toward the pass, Rodrigo galloping by his side. By the time they reached the gate in the first cañon, most of the advance detachment of unmounted Indians had already passed through it into the vestibule beyond, but Pablo was waiting by the gate itself.

"Don Carlos has just received a message," he cried excitedly. "The General crossed the bridge two hours ago. He is moving slowly with much baggage."

"Two hours," thought Roger. "Then we haven't much time."

He found Carlos beside the trail where the river left the gorge to cross the vestibule. He seemed somewhat discouraged.

"We tried to recapture the outer gate," he apologized, "but it is very strong, even from the rear. They shot us down as soon as we came around the bend. Look!" He held up his left arm. The wrist was bound with strips of dirty cloth. "I can't use the hand any more." But then his face brightened. "Pablo told me how you took the fort."

"Yes," said Roger. "And we got the machine-gun back. The water didn't hurt it any."

APPARENTLY Pablo had also told Carlos that Roger was now in command of the valley, for he asked for orders. Roger explained his plan; Carlos listened carefully to every word, exchanging glances with his brother.

"All right," he said with decision. "If the plan fails, we lose the whole valley. But if we don't fight with our brains, we cannot fight at all. We have very little ammunition left. We can't get more. Every day we are weaker. Tell me what you want me to do. I shall obey."

Roger gave him his orders, discussing minutely each detail. Then he took fifty of the best soldiers, all armed with comparatively modern rifles, and led them across the vestibule toward the outer gate. Pablo rode by his side and Rodrigo followed behind with twenty men who carried picks and shovels.

The vestibule was a roughly circular valley about a quarter of a mile across. It was slightly lower than the main valley and its level floor was not fertile soil, but a mixture of rocks and earth covered with cactus and low, thorny scrub. The sides sloped upward steeply, usually ending in vertical cliffs, but the ridge toward the main valley was comparatively low and not very steep.

THE most conspicuous feature in the vestibule was the river, which flowed swiftly out of the cañon through the ridge, hurried across the level ground between low clay banks, and disappeared with a muffled roar into the black cranny of the lower gorge. The trail followed the river, winding among the rocks and bushes. It was smooth, but only a few feet wide.

Roger was particularly interested in the point where the river plunged into the gorge. It approached the mountain wall at a right angle, making a wide cut in the slope of loose debris before it reached the cleft it had carved in the living rock. From outside, the entrance looked like a "V" of dull green against a background of dark rock, which was split in turn by the deeper blackness of the gorge itself. Roger smiled grimly. Rodrigo had told him the accurate truth. The slopes of the "V", close to the rock face, were wholly invisible to anyone coming out of the gorge.

He stopped his horse and waited for Rodrigo to catch up. He pointed to the gorge.

"You were right," he said. "Our plan will succeed."

"We must be careful," said Rodrigo gravely. "They will suspect a trap. They have Ignacio's partisans with them, who are natives of the valley and know it well."

"We'll fool them," said Roger. "The best way to kill a snake is to cut off its head. The body can thrash around, but it can't grab anything. I killed a lot of snakes that way in the Philippines."

Rodrigo led forward a few young Indians who were following close behind him on foot. They were not armed with rifles, only revolvers and machetes.

"These are the best mountain climbers we have," he explained. "I'm going to send them up above the gorge. They will watch for the General's scouts. He mustn't learn what we plan to do. There are only a few paths. These men will watch them all."



"Can they see the General coming?"

"Yes. They can see a part of the trail a long way off. They'll send a message over the mountain."

The scouts started off, running like cats and making for a brush-choked ravine which led up the side of the cliff near the lower gorge.

"Come on," said Roger to the rest of his men. "Let's get to work."

He led his little army down the trail. They approached the gorge with caution. They could see nothing within the mouth, only blackness and shadow. The gate itself was hidden by a shoulder of rock, but suddenly two echoing shots rang out, and bullets hummed overhead.

"The traitors," said Rodrigo. "We'd better drive them back."

At a command from Roger half of the Indians dashed eagerly forward. They ran bent double, scattering among the bushes beside the trail, taking advantage of the cover. Occasionally one would raise his rifle and fire. No answering shots came back; evidently the traitors had retreated to the fortified gate.

ROGER followed the skirmishers and posted a few inside the gorge to watch the trail. Then he dismounted, tethered his horse to a bush, and examined closely the brushy slope just outside the mouth of the gorge. It was pitched at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, and there was hardly room for the trail between the foot of the slope and the river-bank. When the trail entered the gorge itself, it ran along a narrow shelf, cut by the ancient Indians, with incredible labor, in the face of the solid rock. Only a fifty-yard stretch of this ledge was visible from outside the gorge.

"If we had plenty of ammunition for the gun," he said to Rodrigo, "we'd make our stand here."

"Times have changed," said Rodrigo with a shake of his gray head. "We used

to feel safe behind our mountains, but not any more."

Roger called to the Indians who were carrying the picks and shovels and set them to work building an earth embankment across the trail just outside the mouth of the gorge. The work went rapidly, and soon a four-foot wall blocked the entire space between the steep slope and the bank of the river.

"Don Roger," said one of the Indians, "if we make it a little higher and face it with rock, the horses can't jump over."

"No," said Roger. "Leave it the way it is, and build another one just like it thirty feet farther away from the gorge."

The Indians seemed slightly surprised. Roger hadn't explained his plan to anyone except Rodrigo and Carlos, but they asked no questions. Soon the second wall was finished, the two enclosing between them, in a sort of crude fort, a thirty-foot section of the trail.

While the Indians were digging, Roger and Rodrigo explored the brushy slope. Directly under the cliff Roger found what he was looking for—a deep cranny between two blocks of stone. He took the machine-gun with its tripod and ammunition and hid it in the cranny, which was not more than twenty feet from the little earthen fort. Then he climbed to the brush-filled ravine which the scouts had used as a ladder up the mountain. It was steep, only some ten feet wide and densely choked with vegetation supported by a tiny trickle of water in the bottom.

"I wish I'd brought more men," he thought. "Here is room for a hundred."

It was too late now. The time was getting short. Roger made a final inspection of the two walls blocking the trail. Then he called Pablo to him.

"Pablo," said Roger, "take twenty men with rifles and get behind the wall on the trail. When the General comes, you must defend the wall. *But watch me all the time.* When I give a signal with my hand—like this—you must all retreat. Run away! Run as if you cared about nothing but saving your lives. Don't stop running until you hear the machine-gun. Then join Don Carlos and start fighting again."

Pablo smiled a little.

"It's a trick—no?"

"Yes, it's a trick. If the General thinks he's won a battle, he won't be quite so cautious. Get behind the wall now. The General can't be far away."

Pablo picked his twenty men and disposed them behind the outer wall of the

earthen fort. Rodrigo went among them, making sure each soldier had twenty rounds of ammunition. He took the excess and divided it among the rest of the fighting men.

"When do we go up to the hiding-place?" he asked.

"Not yet. The General may have scouts on the mountain. I don't want to show our plan until it's too late for them to warn him."

"That's right."

"You'd better start back with the diggers," said Roger. "They can't fight. They haven't any weapons."

Rodrigo looked at him pleadingly.

"I am not young, Don Roger," he said, "but I can still shoot. Please let me stay here. You are defending my home and my family. I want to be here with you."

"All right. Stay if you want to. It's going to be hot for a while, but if one of us gets hurt the other can carry on. You know the plan."

Rodrigo looked at the sun.

"It's four hours since the General crossed the bridge. He ought to be nearly here."

Roger called out to the diggers and sent them back along the trail. Then he climbed on a block of stone and gazed over the little valley. Rodrigo came and stood beside him.

"I hope Carlos hasn't forgotten anything," said Roger.

"Carlos doesn't forget. Look." Rodrigo pointed to a dozen white specks in the brush on the far side of the river.

Just as Roger jumped down from his perch, he heard an excited cry behind him up the slope. He whirled around. An Indian was running toward him.

"Don Roger," he called. "The General is coming! We saw his men!"

Roger's heart gave a leap.

"Come on," he shouted. "His scouts can't warn him now."

HE scrambled up the slope to the start of the ravine and crowded his thirty Indians into the narrow space beneath the tangled branches. Rodrigo followed them out of sight. Roger took a last look down at the trail, where Pablo's men were kneeling behind the wall, their rifles trained. He waved to Pablo and crouched down himself, his hand on his pistol, his body concealed behind a screen of thorny brush.

They were very still, those thirty-two men. So still that a little black and

yellow bird began hopping through the twigs above Roger's head, and a small animal like a chipmunk ran across an open space with a nut in its mouth.

Roger looked out through the branches, taking a last calm view. Soon he wouldn't have time to look. He was about a hundred feet up the slope from the trail. Across the river he could see the place where the white specks were moving a few minutes ago. They had disappeared beneath the brush, but Roger knew their eyes were awaiting his signal.

IT was a curious interlude of peace—a quiet eddy in the racing stream of time. There was nothing to do but wait. Roger's mind was very active. He saw a dozen memory-pictures—remembered a thousand overlapping events of his past life. He saw his mother's face—the study-hall of his school—an army post in the Philippines. He recalled his life in New York—night-clubs, gambling-rooms, and the girl with the curly blonde hair.

"Rodrigo," he whispered suddenly. "I want to tell you something: If I live, I'm going to leave the valley after this fight, without seeing Lucha again."

Rodrigo raised his eyebrows, but Roger didn't give him time to speak a word.

"Yes," he said with decision. "I must go away, and you must tell Lucha why I've gone."

"Tell me why," said Rodrigo.

"Because it's true," admitted Roger, "—what the newspaper said. Lucha told her father it wasn't true, but it is. I'm a murderer. I killed a girl. The American police are looking for me now."

Rodrigo didn't smile, but he put his arm around Roger's shoulders.

"Lucha told me all about it. She thinks you didn't do it at all. And the American police—they are far away. They do not govern the valley of the Torreons. Stay with us, Don Roger, and forget. We all want you to stay."

"Don't you see?" cried Roger. "I can't stay. It would spoil everything. Even if we do lick General Marso, there'll be others come to attack the valley. You've got to develop your mine and trade your silver for peace and freedom."

"You can help us, Don Roger."

"No, I can't. You *must* understand. I'm a hunted man. I can't help you. You've got to make your peace with the President over the mountains. You've got to find friends in the United States. And you can't do these things while

you're protecting an outlaw. The best thing for me to do is to go away."

Rodrigo shook his head.

"No," he said. "You are wrong. Perhaps you are right *here*." He touched his forehead. "But you are wrong *here*." He put his hand on his heart. "In the heart you are wrong. You must stay."

Roger hesitated. He didn't want to answer. And while he was hesitating, a voice from below broke the silence.

"Don Roger!" called Pablo. "They are coming! The General's men! I can hear them around the bend."

ROGER sprang to his feet, glad to throw his personal troubles into a caldron of perilous action.

He looked down. Pablo and his Indians were kneeling elbow to elbow behind the wall. They were silent, tense, and motionless, their rifles trained on the gorge. Roger fingered his gun with one hand. In the other he held a white handkerchief tied to a short stick.

He waited anxiously, but he didn't have to wait long. He saw Pablo stand up, heard him shout a command in the Indian language. Rifles crashed in close volley. A billow of smoke choked the gorge. A few scattering shots replied, muffled and echoing. One of the Indians fell back, lay writhing on the packed earth. Another Indian whirled around crazily and pitched down into the river.

Now Pablo was kneeling behind the wall, pistol in hand, watching Roger. His men were firing now and then. Apparently they hadn't much to shoot at. Then came a new and terrifying sound from within the gorge—the popping, drumming roar of a machine-gun. The bullets struck the dry dirt of the barricade, raising small puffs of dust. The Indians ducked down to safety out of the deadly stream. Roger waited a moment. Then he dropped his flag and raised his hand, making sure that Pablo was still watching. He waved his hand from side to side—the signal to retreat.

Like a flash the Indians jumped up, leaped over the rear wall, and ran up the trail, leaving the little fort deserted. One fell on his face, but Pablo and the rest scattered off among the bushes.

"Now," said Roger grimly, "we'll see how clever the General is."

He drew back beside Rodrigo, under the screen of brush. Together they watched the empty trail below, the bodies of the dead, the deserted fort. General Marso's machine-gun stopped firing.

"He's making his first mistake," said Roger in a whisper. "He's blocking his own gun. He's going to rush the fort!"

Then came a chorus of savage yells and a rattle of shots. A stream of khaki-clad soldiers poured out of the gorge, leaping over both barricades, hot after the Indians who had retreated into the vestibule. They carried modern rifles with fixed bayonets, and they fired wildly as they ran. About fifty passed. Close on their heels came five mounted men.

Roger looked at Rodrigo. Both smiled triumphantly, for one of the horsemen flashing by was General Marso himself, astride a splendid bay stallion, waving an automatic and shouting orders in a voice like the bellow of an angry bull. He galloped after his soldiers into the vestibule, not wasting a single glance on the slope above the trail.

"We've got him!" whispered Roger tensely.

He raised his flag above the bushes and waved it three times, watching the opposite bank of the river. Nothing happened for a moment; then a crackle of shots rang out from the cactus thicket across the stream where Carlos' Indians lay hidden. Roger couldn't see the effect, but he heard the General's men reply, heard shouted orders and the drum of horses' hoofs.

"Come on!" he cried.

HE charged out of cover and dashed down the slope. Rodrigo followed close behind with his thirty Indian sharpshooters, screaming their wild war-cries, tumbling into the fort on the trail, kneeling down within the walls, firing like mad. Complete confusion reigned. Rifles roared, and a dense cloud of dust and smoke rose up and hung above the river. Roger heard Rodrigo shouting orders. The soldiers broke and ran back into the gorge.

With calm, efficient motions Roger drew the machine-gun out of its cranny and swung it into the fort. He kept his head down. Bullets were slamming close, exploding in puffs of dust on the barricade. He sat the gun on its three legs, trained it down the gorge, pointing through a notch in the wall.

The narrow ledge was packed with men and animals. Some were pressing forward, others trying to run away. Horses and mules were plunging wildly. There was no one in command.

Roger trained the gun on the struggling mass. He pressed the trigger. The

gun roared. Men screamed and shouted. Terrified horses leaped over the brink into the river below, carrying riders and baggage with them. Roger fired in short, accurate bursts. Soon the ledge was empty save for the bodies of horses and men. The rest of the General's army had fled to safety around the nearest bend.

Only then did Roger look behind him. The little valley was full of drifting smoke and running men. The General's advance guard—what was left of it—was making a desperate last stand in the middle of the plain. The five horses were down or plunging with empty saddles among the cactus. From all sides the Indians were closing in, running bent over, from bush to bush, firing from the hip, shouting their war-cries.

IN the fort itself the result was not as cheerful. Half the defenders were dead or wounded. Rodrigo had a bullet through his arm, which he was trying to bandage. But he smiled triumphantly.

"We've won!" he cried. "They have no leader now."

Roger looked back down the gorge. There wasn't a sign of life. Evidently the leaderless army was not in a mood to attempt a rescue.

"What do you think they'll do? Will they come back? You know them better than I do."

"Look," said Rodrigo. "There's the answer."

In the valley the firing had ceased. The soldiers were standing with hands above their heads. In the center of the group Roger recognized General Marso himself, who wore a distinctive uniform and stood a head taller than any one else.

"It is finished," said Rodrigo. "They weren't defending their homes. They were nothing but bandits. Now that we've captured their leader, the others won't fight any more. They didn't love him. They only feared him—and hoped he'd lead them to loot our valley. The rest will run back to Boca del Rio, and the President will send his own troops over the mountains to wipe them out. He's wanted to do it for years."

"I hope you're right," said Roger, "but let's not take any chances. I'll stay here. You go and tell Carlos to send the prisoners into the main valley. Come back with a hundred men."

Rodrigo started off, taking with him the wounded Indians who were able to walk. Roger did what he could for the rest. It was little enough. Then he sat

down behind the machine-gun, keeping a watchful eye on the lower trail.

It was very peaceful in the fort. Even the sound of the river seemed subdued to Roger's ears, deafened by the roar of battle. He felt relaxed, let down. He felt a little sad. He was thinking of Lucha mostly.

"All right," he thought gloomily. "We've won, but where does that leave me? I wish they'd bumped me off with the last shot. I hate to leave this place. I wonder where I'll go?"

He sat in silence for half an hour, thinking of Lucha's bright smile, her clear, dark eyes, the soft, living warmth of her arms. He'd never loved any girl this way—with the love which is flavored with worship.

"Lord," he thought. "I'd give anything in the world to stay. But I can't do it. I'd wreck this place. The State Department will start yelling bloody murder the minute it learns I'm here. No. I've got to go."

His disagreeable train of thought was interrupted by the arrival of Rodrigo and a large company of Indians. Roger led them cautiously into the gorge, rifles cocked, watching for the first sign of opposition. There was none. As far as the first bend the trail was littered with dead men and horses, a wealth of weapons and ammunition lying in utter confusion. The gate itself hung open on its massive hinges. There were no defenders. Roger stationed a strong guard along the trail. Then he turned to Rodrigo.

"I'd better go soon," he said reluctantly. "I'll wait here until you send me a horse."

"No," said Rodrigo. "If you want a horse, you'll have to come and get it." "I'll walk, then."

Rodrigo took him by the arm.

"You'll be killed. The General's soldiers are scattered all over the country. They'll shoot you on sight."

"I can take care of myself."

Roger's mind was still made up, but his words were less assured.

THERE'S an American among the prisoners," continued Rodrigo. "He says he's a friend of yours."

"A friend? Oh yes, I know. That's Joe Petrucci, the General's gun-runner. He's no friend of mine."

"Then we'll shoot him when we shoot the General."

"Shoot the General!" cried Roger. "No! You mustn't do that. You've

got to trade him to the President. Just threaten to let him loose and the President will give you anything you ask for: Local independence. Anything!"

"We're planning to shoot them all," said Rodrigo. "You'd better come back and stop it."

Roger wavered. He knew he was taking advantage of an excuse to see Lucha again. He struggled with his conscience, but the excuse was too good. He mustn't let the Torreons make this one fatal mistake. General Marso was worth too much to them!

"All right," he decided. "I'll come. But I'm leaving tonight."

He started back toward the valley without noticing a faint ghost of a smile on Rodrigo's lips.

CHAPTER VI

AT the mouth of the gorge they found their horses waiting. They cantered across the vestibule toward the inner gate, passing the bodies of men in khaki and white cotton, invaders and defenders, scattered where they fell. They lay thickest in the center of the valley, where the General made his last stand.

"This has happened before," said Rodrigo sadly. "Many times our people have had to pay for their freedom."

"Maybe it won't happen again. When you get that silver mine working, you can buy your freedom instead of fighting for it. You've got to do it right, though."

"You will show us how."

"No. I'm going away."

Rodrigo shook his head, but he said no more. They rode on through the inner cañon and passed the inner gate, which was guarded by a few Indians who looked at Roger with almost idolatrous worship in their black eyes.

"They love you," said Rodrigo softly. "You've brought them victory and hope. You must not go away."

"If I stay any longer I'll bring them all kinds of trouble."

They rode out onto the open plain. The sun was sinking toward the jagged line of the mountains, filling the far end of the valley with lakes of shadow. Everything was very still, for peace had come again. The valley looked exactly as it had when Roger first saw it. He struggled with a lump in his throat, looking down toward the great stone house of the Torreons, age-old and gray among its royal palms. Lucha was there.

It was her house and the house of her ancestors.

"Stop it," he said to himself. "I've got to stop it."

He spurred savagely forward down the dusty trail toward a body of men a quarter of a mile away. They were the prisoners, twenty or thirty of them, shuffling along among their Indian guards. Roger smiled grimly when he picked out General Marso, his well-cut uniform gray with dust. Close behind him was a short, stocky man in whipcord riding breeches and a white silk shirt. His mouth was hard and cruel. His hair was slicked back smoothly. His eyes, black and reptilian, looked out from under heavy brows. It was Joe Petrucci, the gun-runner. His pallid city skin was reddened slightly now with tropical sunburn, but he hadn't changed much since he left New York.

Roger felt a spasm of definite, physical loathing. How *could* he have known such a man? How could he have moved in the same world? Things looked very different now—since he'd met Lucha, since he'd fought her battles. He couldn't bring himself to speak for a while, and Joe Petrucci didn't look around.

Finally Roger pushed up abreast. When the gun-runner saw him, his eyes lighted with genuine relief.

"My pal!" he cried. "I been looking for you."

"You're no pal of mine," said Roger coldly. "I needed you once—in New York. But I couldn't find you. Why did you come down here?"

"Same reason as you, I guess. Everybody's apt to have a little trouble with the cops, now and then. Say, what are they going to do to me?"

"Shoot you, probably," said Roger.

"Shoot me?" Joe Petrucci's eyes narrowed with sheer terror. "They can't do that."

"Why not? Don't act like a baby. Look at your boss."

GENERAL MARSO was striding along among his captors like an ugly idol. He knew he hadn't long to live, but his face showed only anger, not the slightest trace of fear. Joe Petrucci's eyes flashed back to Roger. They were threatening now. "You *better* make them go easy," he growled. "I know too much about you."

"Don't kid yourself," said Roger. "You can't do anything for me or against me. You're *through*."

"We'll lay you down on your back, Mr. Petrucci," said Lucha, "tied to four stakes. . . . The next day we'll bury a clean white skeleton dressed in a suit of clothes."



He spurred his horse and pushed ahead, but he couldn't gallop away from his thoughts. Joe Petrucci was part of his past life, a leading character in its darkest chapter. Roger couldn't get him out of his mind.

"I wonder why he came down here," he speculated. "Some jam about the guns, I guess. Maybe I ought to send him back to New York. But they'd only give him a few years up the river and turn him loose with a pat on the back. Better let the Torreons take care of him."

He rode on, deep in gloomy thought. His horse fell to a walk, but Roger didn't notice. He paid no attention to Rodrigo, who came up behind him and rode by his

side in silence. He was conscious of nothing but his imminent departure from the valley, which occupied his whole mind like the steady throb of an aching tooth.

"Don Roger," said Rodrigo quietly. "Look. Here's some one coming to meet you."

Roger glanced up. Cantering toward him was Lucha, riding her little sorrel mare and looking extremely attractive in her quaint full-skirted costume.

"How did she know I was coming?" he demanded accusingly.

"I told her," admitted Rodrigo. "I sent her a message. I said you were planning to go away."

"You shouldn't have done that. I didn't intend to see her again."

Rodrigo only smiled in silence. Roger was pleased, of course, in spite of himself. He watched with growing emotion

as the girl approached—such a small, delicate figure, but the actual, living center of his entire world. He could see her face now—a worried face, not smiling at all. She came close and reined up her horse.

"Roger!" she cried. "They told me. You mustn't go away. You mustn't think of it. I won't let you."

He took a deep breath. This was the scene he'd been dreading and trying to avoid.

"I've got to," he said slowly. "I told your uncle why. He didn't understand. But you'll understand, Lucha."

"No, I won't! I refuse! There's no use telling me."

"I'm going to tell you," said Roger in a dull, spiritless voice. "You've got a job ahead of you, Lucha. You've got to learn to live as part of the modern world. You've got to develop your silver mine. With the money you'll get you can buy modern arms, you can build roads, you can hire teachers to train your Indians. Then you'll be safe. But if you don't do it pretty soon, the next bandit that comes along will break in here and wreck the place for keeps. The mine's no secret now."

"Yes, Roger. We'll do it together. You *mustn't* go away."

ROGER shook his head. "I've got to. I can't help you by staying; I'd only make it harder."

"Don't you want to stay?"

"Of course I do. But Lucha, try to understand. I've wasted my whole life except the last two days. I've never done anything else I want to remember. I ran away down here—ran away from the electric chair. You trusted me, you and your father and your uncles. You let me fight for you. It's the only fine thing I've ever done. I don't want to spoil the memory."

"How can you spoil it? We all love you here."

"I can—and would—spoil everything here by not going away. Listen, Lucha. Your troubles aren't over yet. You've got to deal with the President over the mountains. He'll be friendly to begin with because you've caught General Marso for him, but he won't stay friendly long. He'll try to steal your silver, or the next man will. The only way you can stop him is to get support in the United States, and you can't do it while I'm here. I'm a murderer. The State Department will demand my extradition,

and that will scare off every dollar of American capital. I'm a liability. You can't do anything as long as I stay here."

"You're not a murderer," cried Lucha. "Don't say such things. I don't believe it."

Roger shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"I wish you were right, but I remember too well. The police have the bottle with my fingerprints on it. That's enough to convict me."

"You *couldn't*, Roger. You couldn't have done it. I know you better than you know yourself."

"I was drunk. Ask Joe Petrucci, that gun-runner friend of Ignacio's. We caught him with the General. He'll tell you all about me."

"I *will* ask him."

THERE was a tense, metallic tone in her voice, and Roger watched with something akin to amazement the change which came over her face. She wasn't a small, delicate girl any more, pleading and sorrowful. Her eyes were hard, commanding, resolute. Her cheeks were pale, and her lips were straight, firm lines.

"I *will* ask him," she said again. "Where is he?"

"Coming with the prisoners. Ask him all about it. He'll tell you plenty."

Lucha sat silent in the saddle. She seemed to be thinking hard. She didn't speak until the prisoners arrived.

"Bring me the American," she called to the guards.

Presently Joe Petrucci was standing before her.

"Who's this dame?" he asked.

"She's the boss," said Roger. "She can have you shot like snapping her fingers."

"A dame like her?"

Lucha looked down with infinite contempt. The gun-runner seemed to shrink in actual physical stature before the power of her clear, dark eyes.

"Mr. Petrucci," she said slowly, "now you're going to tell us what happened the night Clara Jordan was killed. We know almost everything already, but we want to know the rest. If I catch you in a single lie, I shall have you shot on the spot."

She spoke a few words in the Indian language. The guards stepped back, cocking their rifles, while Joe Petrucci sized her up with his shifty, calculating eyes.

"Well," he began smoothly, "it was this way: Clara told me and Abe to come along with her. She was going to put the heat on your boy-friend here. She had plenty on us, so we played along. We sat around awhile. She told your boy-friend she was going to frame him and send him up the river if he didn't come across with ten grand. He was getting pretty mad, so I said to Abe, I said, 'Let's get out of here. Something's going to happen, and maybe it'll mean the chair—'"

Lucha held up an imperious hand.

"Stop!" she cried. "You are lying. You've told a dozen lies already. Tell the whole truth now, or you won't get a chance to talk again."

Joe Petrucci's eyes were shifting nervously from Lucha to Roger, to the guards with their rifles ready.

"Hurry up," commanded Lucha. "Start over again. Tell the whole story, and no lies. Remember, we know most of it already."

The look of glib assurance had left his face. He seemed like a hunted animal, furtive and fearful. His lips began to tremble.

"I *won't* talk," he screamed suddenly. "Go ahead and shoot me! I'd rather be shot than fry in the chair."

The chair!

A flicker of surprise passed across Roger's face, but he preserved a stony silence.

"No," said Lucha with the faintest note of triumph in her voice, "we don't shoot men like you. Your friend the General has a little trick he plays on prisoners. We can play it too. It's much more painful than the chair."

BESIDE the road was a rough pasture dotted thickly with large decaying stumps. Lucha jumped her mare across the shallow ditch and went from stump to stump, apparently looking for something on the ground. Finally she stopped and dismounted.

"Bring the American here," she called to the guards. "Keep the rest of the prisoners where they are."

Roger leaped to the ground beside her.

"What are you trying to do?" he demanded. "That rat told the truth. Just what I told you."

"We'll see about that," said Lucha. "Let me alone. Don't say anything, Roger. I know what I'm doing."

Her sensitive lips were trembling a little, but her eyes showed an astonish-

ing intensity of purpose. She seemed to be holding herself with an iron hand to the straight, difficult path of some appalling duty.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Joe Petrucci as he came up. "Shoot me?"

"No," said Lucha. "I told you I wasn't going to shoot you. Look!"

She pointed down at the ground. Close to a rotten stump was a low domelike mound of bare earth. It was about eighteen inches high and six feet in diameter. No grass grew on it. No grass grew near it. An irregular ring of lifeless soil extended several feet away.

"Look," said Lucha again.

She walked over to the mound and kicked the hard earth with the toe of her riding-boot. She kicked it several times, making a shallow hole.

"Come here," she said to Joe Petrucci.

HE approached willingly enough. Most of the terror had left his face. He seemed interested and curious.

"Watch," said Lucha, pointing to the hole.

For a moment nothing happened. Then the loose earth began to come to life. It stirred and rippled. Its particles began to move. They were alive. The hole was full of small gray-brown insects. There were several kinds. Some were small, soft and feeble. Others were larger, with great strong jaws like wire-cutters. They were all running about busily, repairing the breach in their fortress wall.

"*Ants!*" And Joe Petrucci shuddered. "*Ants!*"

"I think you understand," said Lucha. "You've heard about it from the General. It's a favorite amusement of his."

"Ants," Joe Petrucci cried out again. His face was gray with fear. His lower lip hung loose.

"But," continued Lucha in the same calm voice, "perhaps you don't know all the details. So I shall tell you."

She looked into the hole with interest. Then she turned back.

"Only a few have come out," she said. "It's nearly sundown. They do most of their work by day. There are millions of them in there, and millions of little soft white grubs, all hungry."

She smiled faintly at Joe Petrucci. He looked as if he were about to faint. His knees wobbled.

"Hold him up," said Lucha to the Indian guards. "Don't let him fall."

Then she continued her lecture, in a calm, even voice as if she were giving an afternoon talk to a ladies' garden club.

"We'll lay you down on your back, Mr. Petrucci," she said, "tied to four stakes. Only a few of the ants will find you to-night. Just enough to keep you awake. They'll wait for the sunrise. Then they'll come by the million. They'll begin with your eyes; they like the salt of tears. They'll go inside your clothes. They'll cut you up into little bits and carry you underground to feed their grubs. They'll take your heart, your brain, the marrow of your bones. We'll come back the next day and bury a clean white skeleton dressed in a perfect suit of clothes."

She stopped and looked at Joe Petrucci. He was staring down at the ground, speechless with fascinated horror.

"But perhaps," suggested Lucha, "you prefer to risk a trial in New York. You've got a good chance to escape. The American courts are not very strict, and the lawyers are clever."

The gun-runner found his voice.

"I'll talk!" he screamed. "I'll talk! Take me away from here!"

"Bring him closer," said Lucha to the guards.

The Indians dragged him to a few feet from the mound and held him tight.

"Now tell us exactly what happened that night," said Lucha. "One little lie, and we stake you down. Remember, we know pretty nearly the whole story."

JOE PETRUCCI'S tongue was loosened. He wasn't lying now. His whole tone was different.

"We framed him," he cried. "We framed him. Clara Jordan had a lot on us. We knew she'd be putting the heat on us, too, pretty quick. So we figured how we could bump her off and make your boy-friend think he done it."

Roger drew a deep breath. He didn't speak. He hardly dared think at all. He merely watched Lucha with speechless amazement.

"Tell us how you did it," commanded Lucha. "We want all the details."

"I didn't do it. Abe Fishel thought it up. He told Clara how she could get ten grand out of your boy-friend by saying she was going to frame him."

The gun-runner kept his eyes on the insects, which were swarming close to his feet. He seemed almost pathetically eager to tell the whole story.

"We all went up together to see him," he continued. "He got mad as hell when

Clara put on the heat—just what we were looking for. Abe slipped a little dope in his drink. It began to work quick. Before he passed out, we went into the hall and left him alone with Clara. He saw us go."

"When we came back, he was dead to the world. Clara thought he was just drunk. Then Abe went around behind her and grabbed a bottle and cracked her over the head. The bottle busted. We wiped the finger-prints off and put the neck in his hand. Then we beat it before he woke up."

LUCHA didn't look at Roger. She merely nodded as if she'd known the whole story all along.

"All right so far," she said. "You thought he'd wake up and decide he did the thing himself. Very clever. But tell us the rest."

"There isn't any more."

Lucha frowned.

"You'll have to tell us a great deal more," she said ominously. "We want evidence which will convict you before an American court."

"There isn't any."

"You're still trying to escape," said Lucha, "but you can't do it. You're a prisoner of war, Mr. Petrucci, in a country where prisoners are almost always executed and sometimes tortured. You have two choices—to take your chances before an easy-going American court, or to feed the ants. Find us some evidence, or we'll stake you down."

"Tell the cops to give Abe Fishel the works."

"Nonsense. He's probably run away too. You've got to do better. Why did you run away? You haven't told us yet."

Joe Petrucci squirmed, looking down at the insects near his feet. He was weakening visibly. His face was dead white, and his whole body was trembling.

"All right," he cried suddenly, "I'll tell you. I had to skip down here because I told my girl all about the job. She double-crossed me. She wants more dough than I've got or she'll spill the story. That's why I skipped."

"Have you proof of that?"

Joe Petrucci snarled. He felt in an inside pocket, producing a dirty envelope.

"Yeah, damn you! You're worse than a dick. Here's a letter from Abe. He's hiding away upstate. He sent a lawyer to find how much she knew."

Lucha took the letter and read it carefully, a grim smile spreading slowly

across her face. Then she handed it over to Roger. The letter was short, but it was quite sufficient, although it would have meant little without Joe Petrucci's explanation. It read:

Dear Joe:

Stay where you are. She knows enough to burn us both. The cops are still looking for the other guy. He got a letter to General Marso, so he'll probably show up in Boca del Rio pretty quick. Have the General send him back. That's the best bet.

Abe.

"Good," said Lucha. "It will clear Mr. Phillips completely."

She looked at Roger. Her face wasn't hard and determined any more. Her lips were trembling and her eyes were very wide.

"Take them away," she ordered suddenly. "Take them all away quick."

The Indian guards leaped forward and dragged Joe Petrucci back to the road. The convoy of the prisoners moved away toward the house. Rodrigo went with them, leaving Roger and Lucha alone.

They both stood silent for a moment. Roger was bewildered, like a man whose frightful toothache has suddenly stopped, leaving him incredulous, unable to believe his good fortune and fearful that the pain will soon begin again. Lucha was white and wholly unnerved. Suddenly she ran to Roger like a frightened little girl and hid her face in his coat.

"Oh, my darling," she sobbed. "I don't know how I did it! I never said such things before."

HE put his arm around her. She was limp and trembling, not at all the imperious, determined person of a few minutes ago.

"But how did you know?" he asked wonderingly. "I really thought I killed that girl."

"Of course you did. That's what they wanted you to think. But I *knew*. You said you were drunk, but when a man gets drunk his real character comes out. You are good and honorable, Roger. I knew you couldn't have killed her, no matter how much she deserved it."

"How did you know Joe Petrucci framed me?"

"I didn't. But I knew he got to Boca del Rio before we did, so he must have left New York right after it happened and flown part of the way. He wouldn't have run away without some pretty good

reason, so I knew he was mixed up with the murder somehow. You said he was entirely innocent."

"You ought to be a lawyer."

"No," said Lucha with a shudder. "I couldn't. I couldn't do such a thing again, even to keep you from going away."

"Were you really going to stake him down on that ant-hill?"

She looked up into his face. Her eyes were very serious at first. Then they began to twinkle.

"Those aren't ants at all," she said with a smile. "They're termites. They don't eat anything but wood." She broke off to laugh gayly. "We owe them a lot, Roger, so tomorrow I'm going to bring them a lot of nice wood to eat."

ROGER laughed too. The tension was broken, and the past receded quickly. It seemed now a thousand years ago that he'd shot Ignacio Lopez, had ambushed General Marso. A new life was beginning—a bright, clear, wonderful life.

"I'll take Joe Petrucci back to New York," he said, "and hand him over to the cops. I'll stay until I've cleared myself completely, but not a minute longer. Then I'll come back to you, Lucha. We'll get married, and we'll start work."

He put his arm around her and held her tight. Together they looked toward the west. The sun was setting. The valley was full of dull reddish light, tinting the ancient walls of the great stone house with delicate pink. Dogs were barking far away in the Indian villages, cocks were crowing, and a burro was singing his raucous song.

"Yes, Lucha. Then we'll get to work. We've got the finest job in the world, the two of us." He spoke slowly, with long pauses between, while they watched the sunset. "The best job in the world: the Valley of the Torreons. We'll make it rich, and we'll keep the people happy and free."

The girl's slim arm went around his waist.

"You're like my ancestor, Roger," she whispered softly. "Like Rodolfo Torreon. The Indians captured him four hundred years ago. They won his heart, and he brought them the knowledge and the weapons of Spain. But the world has changed since then. We needed a new leader, so I captured you, Roger."

"Yes, you captured me. And I'll bring you the best that America can give."

THE END

The Pay-off Play

The brief story of a hard-pressed football coach who uses his head and gives his opponents the surprise of their lives.

By TALBERT JOSSELYN

UNLESS he performed a miracle within the week, this would be Dan Crowdell's last year at the University as football coach. The team had lost three of its four major games of the season; it would lose its fourth, and biggest game, on Saturday. And the alumni—in particular the betting alumni—were in a baying pack at Dan's heels. Around five o'clock Saturday afternoon, they would close in on him and pull him down.

Ever a tight-mouthed man, old Dan had remained extra tight-mouthed. Why tell them what they already knew—that good football teams run in cycles; now you're at the top, and there you stay awhile; then you begin to go down, down, until you reach bottom; and then finally you begin to go up again.

For three years the team had been at the bottom. Next year it would start up; it had the finest bunch of freshmen coming along in a decade. . . . But they'd come too late for Dan Crowdell. The alumni wanted results, *now*. The material Dan Crowdell had now, wasn't capable of results—and there you were.

Not but what those boys had tried; never in thirty years as a coach had Dan Crowdell seen boys try harder—but they simply weren't good enough; and never had Dan loved a team better, for they had never quit trying, even though they knew they weren't good enough. How he would like to give them a victory in their last game! But it would take a miracle; and miracles weren't hovering over the University that year.

He had been walking around the campus for the past hour, trying to think a way out; at that moment he sat on a class bench. His eyes took in the track and field bleachers below. The track—it would be warm springtime before lightly clad athletes would be circling that track; but he would not be on the campus.

With a little shiver he brought his gaze back to the bench, and for the first time noticed that some one had left a book lying there. Idly he picked it up.

"Elements of Psychology." Old Dan regarded it dubiously, thrusting out his under lip. That was a course he'd never bumped into, thirty years ago. Psychology—long words. He opened the book. On the flyleaf was written the owner's name and the course, Psychology 1A. He turned to the first page.

"Psychology," was the opening statement, "is the study of the mind."

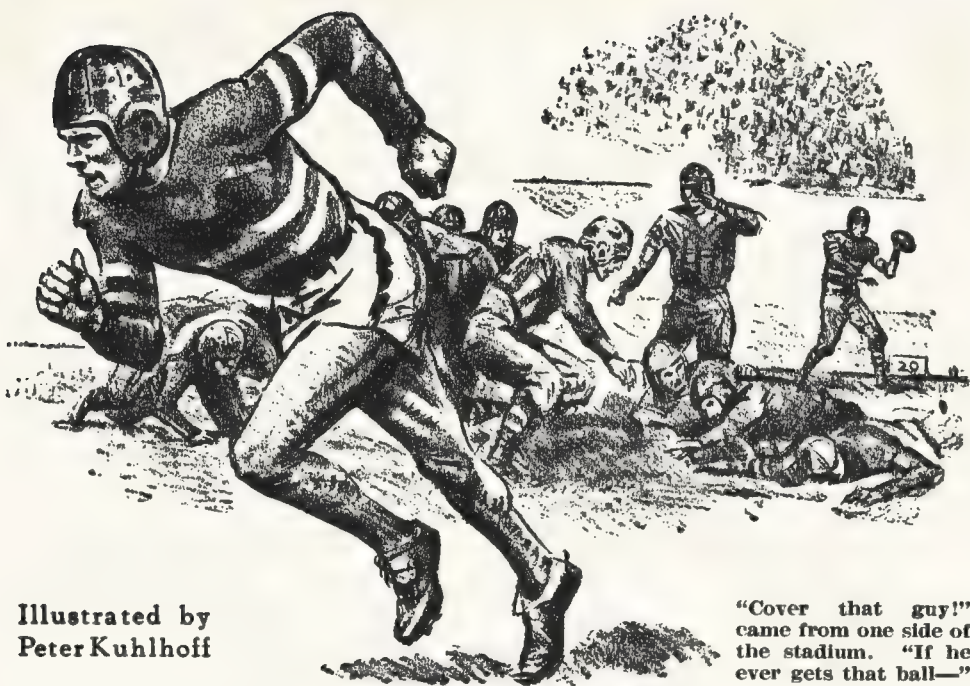
"Fair enough," said Dan, and started to read. A moment later he was hauling himself out of a swamp of words. He shook his head, tried another page. He hauled himself out again, more quickly this time, tried once more, and put the book down. "Like bucking the line with nobody opening the holes," he muttered.

Two or three of the phrases remained. "*Science of the mind . . . why we behave as we do.*" "Huh!" said old Dan, and fell to studying the empty track bleachers again. The phrases remained with him, seeming to demand that he do something about them, that he translate them into useful action.

"Yeah!" snorted Dan. "Translate psychology into track—into football."

And now Dan Crowdell sat up, and went hot all over, and cold all over, and hot again. Then he was on his feet and was staring and staring at the track bleachers, with a peculiar light in his eyes, and he was clutching at those phrases: "*the mind . . . behavior . . . cause and effect.*" Then he was striding swiftly away, smiting fist in palm.

WITH three minutes left to play in the game, the University team trailed six points to ten. And this didn't begin to show the disparity between the two teams. Only by repeated, desperate



Illustrated by
Peter Kuhlhoff

"Cover that guy!"
came from one side of
the stadium. "If he
ever gets that ball—"

goal-line stands had the University held down the score. It had made its own points on a blocked punt; the enemy had swept the length of the field for a touchdown, had kicked a field goal; and now in these closing minutes it was rolling again.

The enemy side of the stadium was in jubilant howl, the University's side glum and sullen. Crowdell called himself a coach, did he? Well, three minutes from now, he wouldn't be coach any more.

On the University's twenty-yard line the enemy team attempted a pass. Somehow one of the University linesmen broke through, chased the passer back and back, and smothered him before he could get the ball away. . . . Fourth down on the thirty-five-yard line, and the enemy prepared to kick to coffin corner, where they had been kicking all afternoon.

As the enemy swung from its huddle, down on the long University bench old Dan spoke to the player at his side.

"Now!"

The player threw off his blanket, leaped to his feet, and began racing up and down the side-line. There was a murmur—a rising ripple of sound—a roar. All eyes became fixed on that player. He had on a football headguard and jersey, but he didn't have on football pants. They were track pants, revealing slender, long legs—legs now flashing up and down as they drove their owner swiftly, effortlessly along the side-line.

Now the voices were at full flood. "Look! Crowdell's going to send in a track man. Speed! Just as soon as they get the ball, they'll turn him loose. That's pulling one! Boy, oh, boy—watch that guy warm up!"

The enemy kicker, being only human, turned for an instant to glance toward the cause of the uproar. He saw it. His mind leaped ahead to the implications which that racing figure gave, and came back to the task at hand—but didn't come completely back. He punted, and for the first time that afternoon, instead of reaching coffin corner, he kicked out of bounds on the twenty-yard line.

INSTANTLY the lightly clad figure of the side-line started onto the field. Seventy thousand pairs of eyes watched him skim over the torn turf with the breath-taking ease of a swallow. He handed his player's card to the referee; one of his team-mates came out; he stood waiting.

All of the stadium was on its feet, babbling. He'd do one of two things: either run with the ball or take a pass. . . . The huddle broke; the players came up to the line of scrimmage, and he was at right end.

"Pass!" said seventy thousand.

The center rifled the ball back. As it left the center's hands, the new right end started sprinting straight down the field.

The stadium became a single voice that welled up, up, in a blend of hope, of fear. "Ah-h-h!"

Ten—twenty—thirty yards the fleet—ing figure streaked, then cut sharply to his right. The wildly galloping back-field man who was trying to cover him staggered—cut also.

The ball was in the air. The stadium was a siren shriek of sound. The ball was coming—coming. The shriek split into a shout, a groan. The ball had struck the ground, short; the sprinting figure had been too fast for it.

The teams returned to position to the clack of countless tongues. "If he'd ever got his hands on it, he'd have been away! If that dumb passer had only passed far enough!"

The teams lined up. Once more the sprinting figure was going down the field. . . . The ball was in the air. . . . Clamor was rising, rising—was dying again. The pass had been just too far to one side of the reaching, track-clad figure.

A third time the teams lined up, and "Cover that guy!" came from one side of the stadium. "If he ever gets that ball!" And, "Throw that pass to him!" came from the stadium's other side. "Give him a chance, you passer! Now!"

The sprinting figure was again winging down the field. . . . The ball was in the air. . . .

Yes, the ball was in the air, was shooting diagonally across the field, straight into the hands of the other end, the left end. From somewhere out of the ground two blockers came into being and dumped the nearest defending backs. The left end ran sixty yards. On the three-yard line somebody got him, but he had power enough left to drive across the goal-line.

IN a lunatic dressing-room the alumni—especially the betting alumni—were pounding old Dan on the back. Good old Dan! He gave them no heed, being busy talking to the newspaper men.

"Where'd I get that track man? Huh, he wasn't a track man."

"What?" came question in chorus.

"Nope. He's a third-string scrub end that nobody'd ever noticed. He couldn't run a hundred yards downhill in eleven seconds. . . . But by putting him into a track suit, he looked and acted so fast that their defensive backs were five yards out of position when the pay-off play came."

REAL EX-

In this department a group of your fellow-readers tell of their most exciting adventures. (For details of our Real Experience Contest, see Page 3.) First a noted fighting man describes a minor war which the O'Reillys waged in Japan.

Nagasaki Riot

A FEW days ago I listened to the yarns of a tourist recently returned from a vacation journey through Japan. He spoke with especial enthusiasm of Nagasaki, of its temple-guarded harbor, and the little flower-bordered river, girdled with quaint bridges, which divides the town. "A dream of beauty and peace," he declared.

My mind hopped back across the years to a day long ago when that very river and those quaint bridges was the battleground for as bloody a riot as it was ever my fortune to survive. I still bear a scar across my nose which is the wound-stripe of that forty-eight-hour war.

Technically I had no business in that scrap, as it was staged between British bluejackets and French soldiers—but it seemed to be anybody's fight, and I signed up for the duration. In fact, I was accused by an international investigating committee of starting the barney. I didn't land the first punch; but I was on the receiving end of the second.

Shore-leave riots are nothing new in the Orient. But the Nagasaki riot is considered by old-timers as the tops in spontaneous assault and battery. It happened back in 1900, when the troops of the foreign allies were drifting back from the Boxer expedition in North China. The American transport *Logan* was coaling in the harbor and as it happened, I was a member of the small guard.

A French transport was also coaling that day; and anchored in the harbor were two British warships, H.M.S. *Barflour*, and H.M.S. *Ocean*. By ill fortune

PERIENCES



By MAJOR EDWARD (TEX) O'REILLY

the crews of the British ships and the French soldiers were given shore liberty on the same day. There were about two hundred and fifty British bluejackets and five hundred French soldiers carousing about, and I was one of eleven American soldiers who were granted shore leave.

After wandering around the colorful native city for a time, I retraced my steps to Whisky Row, a line of foreign bar-rooms leading up from the *hataba*, or boat-landing. My eye caught a sign reading the "Flag of All Nations Bar." It was a resort of evil fame in the Far East, so naturally, being a big kid full of curiosity, I walked in to have a look-see.

Seated at tables along the wall were twelve French soldiers having noisy sing-song, and arguing. The only customer at the bar was a British fireman, one of the biggest men I have ever seen. I was no half-pint myself in those days, standing six feet four and weighing two hundred pounds; but this bluejacket towered at least two inches over me and outweighed me by thirty pounds. His hair and beard were a ruddy maroon color.

"Hello, Yank," he said as I ordered a stone mug of ale.

"It's mighty seldom I run across a man taller than I am," I answered by way of a compliment.

"Hell, Yank, where I come from, they don't put the lads in long pants until they are bigger than you are," he declared.

"Where is this neck of the woods where they grow so tall?"

"The grand old County Cavan, Ireland," he replied. "Me name is Shamus O'Reilly."

You see, it was the long arm of fate, for my name was O'Reilly, my great-grandfather was Shamus O'Reilly, and he came from the County Cavan. There could be but one outcome to such a meeting: we had a few more drinks.

We were standing at the bar boasting with loud modesty of the greatness of our mutual ancestors, when a little American hospital-corps man, an invalid being sent back to the States, wandered into the bar. In walking down the room he accidentally stumbled over the outstretched foot of one of the French soldiers. The soldier kicked him, knocking the little American to his hands and knees.

Without a word the red-headed giant at my side drew back his arm and heaved his crockery mug straight at the Frenchman's head, scoring a bull's-eye. The next second I was in the midst of as fine a free-for-all as ever a Cavan man could hope to see.

Anyone who thinks that just because Frenchmen eat frogs they won't fight is sadly mistaken. It only makes them more ferocious. That gang of soldiers charged into the fray. The air was filled with flying bottles and splintered chairs.

Roaring like the Great Brown Bull of King Conchabar, the other O'Reilly waded in with fists flying, while I held up my end of the battle. Those Frenchmen had the advantage of numbers, and seemed to be remembering Waterloo. They locked the doors, and the Old Guard charged.

I was standing with my rear protected by the bar, swinging the leg of a chair which I happened to find in my hand, when the side door of the saloon splintered and crashed in. Although I am a patriotic American who hesitates to admit that the Revolutionary War is over, I freely admit that I was highly pleased to see a squad of British sailors surge in and attack the enemy in the left flank. In a minute we drove the soldiers out.

I shall never forget the scene I beheld when I stepped outside, twirling my chair-leg and giving the rebel yell. In the street there were twenty good-sized riots going on at the same time. Japanese cops were dancing about trying to calm the storm, but they were about as effective as a horse-fly on a bucking bronco.

"Come on, Yank," yelled the red O'Reilly; and we joined up for the war.

What a beautiful battle that was for the next half hour! It was mass mayhem, with no holds barred. Gradually we drove the soldiers down the street and across the bridges, over the river. It was only a temporary victory, however, as the French used the lull in hostilities to bring up their reserves.

Messengers were sent out to the resorts north of the river. Squads of soldiers came double-timing from the sing-song houses of Russian Hill, and soon we were outnumbered. The British cohorts settled down to defend the bridges, and hold the more aristocratic section of the red-light district on the south side of the river.

That war lasted for forty-eight hours. I do not mean that the entire force was engaged continuously for that time. By mutual consent the battle would die down for rest-periods and repairs. Then the combatants would rally again, and one side or the other would carry the war into enemy territory. There was not a minute of the two days, however, when sniping was not going on at the bridges.

To add to the horrors of war a little Scotch sailor appeared with a bagpipe. He said he found it in a saloon. I have heard some Scots shamelessly insist that the bagpipe is a musical instrument; however that may be, it has the faculty of making men want to fight.

The little Scotty went charging around, joining in every skirmish, lustily blowing "McCrimmin's Lament," to put heart in the boys; but at last he was surrounded and captured by the French. This blow to the morale of our side could not be endured. The other O'Reilly and myself formed a wrecking crew of volunteers and charged to the rescue. We did rescue the valiant little Scot and his pipes, but the French had taken a foul advantage. They had slit the wind-bag, and the thing wouldn't function. That made all the Scotchmen fight harder.

THE second morning a sinister note entered into the fray. Curio shops in Nagasaki had bundles of cheap sword-canes exposed for sale to tourists. Many of the Frenchmen raided these stores and armed themselves with these canes, and the report came that a British sailor had been stabbed to death. That drove the Britishers crazy. We organized several raiding squads seeking the men who were armed. Whenever a soldier was caught with a knife or sword-cane, he fought no more that day.

It is a significant fact that of the seven British and three French killed in that riot, all the British were killed with these sword-canes, and all the French died from fractured skulls. There were dozens of broken arms and cracked ribs.

After the first few minutes of the battle, the Japanese police had retired from the war-zone, and had drawn a sanitary cordon around the troubled area. Japanese officials had forbidden the landing of armed forces from the warships and transport, and it seemed as if that riot must go on forever.

AT last, after frantic telegraphic appeals from the British and French consuls, big-wigs at Tokio granted a permit to land. A company of armed marines, from the British ships, and a company of soldiers from the transport, made up the landing-party. In single file they rushed up along the river, the French on one side, the British on the other. The war was over—peace without victory!

Rapidly the rioters were rounded up and marched off to the boats. As the other O'Reilly marched past me, grinning through his bruises, he waved his hand and yelled:

"Wasn't it a lovely barney, Yank? You're a credit to old Cavan."

I slipped away, limping with both legs, and managed to find a sampan to take me back to the transport. As I painfully climbed the gangplank, the officer of the deck took one look at me, and growled:

"You're under arrest, but report to the hospital."

When I went into drydock in the sick-bay, it was found that I had a broken nose, two cracked ribs, two black eyes, and cuts and bruises beyond counting.

There was a serious sequel to that riot. The British and French governments appointed an official commission to investigate and fix the blame. They followed me to the Philippines, and I was compelled to sign numerous statements.

More than two years later, when I was out of the American service and working as a policeman in Shanghai, I read the final verdict of the commission. France got the worst of the diplomatic duel, and agreed to pay an indemnity to the dead soldiers' families. England apologized to France, and France apologized to England; and both apologized to Japan.

Old-timers still speak in awe of the Nagasaki riot. I have been in wars where the casualty-list was shorter.

A Ranger's Quest

*An old-time Texas Ranger gets his man
—and a quaint experience in the bargain.*

By SERGEANT IRA ATEN



I WAS camped one time with a detachment of Rangers at Camp Wood in Nueces Cañon in Edwards County, when a call came that a mysterious man was camped in the mountains over on Devil River. This man was reported as robbing the ranchers and camps of grub and whatever else he needed. This place was about a hundred miles away and a very rough country to go through to get there. I decided to go alone and live off the country, sleeping wherever I found myself when night overtook me.

To rob a camp of grub and bedding in that country was a serious offense, worse even than horse-stealing, because these camps were so far from town that one might starve or freeze to death before he got relief, in case some one stole his equipment. In some cases the nearest town was from seventy-five to one hundred miles distant.

A very rough mountain road led up the West Nueces to the last camp and watering-place before going out on the divide between the West Nueces and Devil rivers. There were no trails across the divide. The nearest water was some fifty or sixty miles away, unless one had the good luck to strike a camp, or was able to trail the deer up some cañon to their secret watering-spring.

I took my compass to steer me straight, my faithful horse which I rode during my six and one-half years in the Ranger service, my saddle, blanket and slicker for bedding. I bid the boys goodbye, saying: "You need not look for me until you see me."

The second day, about noon, I came to a sheep-camp, the last watering-place on the West Nueces; here I camped for the night, getting what information I could about crossing the divide. I started out very early the next morning heading almost due west. It was very rough on the

divide; my horse could travel only about three miles an hour. At noon I made a dry camp. There was no water at hand for my horse, but I had a full canteen and some jerked mutton I had got at the sheep-camp.

Along toward evening I struck a draw leading slightly to the southwest. I knew it must be a branch of Devil River and headed my horse down it. Deer-trails became numerous, and I knew they would lead me to water, though it might be ten or even fifteen miles away. About sundown I rode right into a bunch of some twenty-five or thirty deer. They made such pretty shots that I couldn't resist the temptation.

From horseback I shot one of the deer. The rest just ran around a bit and then came closer to see what it was all about. I shot another. They kept on darting around me; then they stopped and looked at me so innocently that I just had to quit shooting, knowing I could not save the meat. I rode right through them, leaving them standing and looking after me, bewildered. I doubt if they had seen many men.

I kept on riding down the draw. The trail, though crooked, was much easier for my horse to travel. It soon began to open up into a wide cañon, and the hills got much higher and rougher on each side. My horse was extremely tired and thirsty, and my canteen almost empty.

About that time the gleam of a camp-fire showed up through the brush ahead. I stopped my horse and went on afoot to reconnoiter. Coming near the camp, I saw an old gray-bearded man sitting by the fire. He looked much like Santa Claus. I was perplexed for a moment, wondering whether or not this was the

man I was after. I decided to ride right into his camp and ask to stay all night, posing as a cowpuncher looking for cattle that might have drifted down from the Beaver Lake country thirty miles above on Devil River.

The old man had a six-shooter buckled around his middle, and at the sound of my horse's step he picked up his rifle, a long-barreled gun, and stood there waiting for me. That frightened me a little, but I thought perhaps I could talk him out of a fight. As I rode up to his campfire, my right hand ready to grasp my pistol in case I should need it, the old man was standing by the campfire, gun in hand.

I greeted him cordially, and he said, "Howdy, stranger." I told him I was a cowboy from the Beaver Lake country looking for stray cattle. He said, "Get off, stranger, and stay all night," which I was glad to do.

He had a light wagon and two small ponies which he used to haul his water and grub out from Devil River into the wild game country. He gave my horse a bucket of water, for which I was very thankful. He fried some venison for me, and added cold sourdough biscuits with a cup of hot coffee, which made an excellent meal. He kept close to that long gun of his, which I did not like; but I made up my mind to make the best of things that night. In the morning I would find out more about him. I made my bed out a little distance from the campfire, staking my horse close to my bed. The saddle-blanket was used for bedding, my slicker for covering, and the saddle for a pillow.

The old man's bed was on the other side of the fire. I bade him a cordial good-night, and he answered: "Good night, stranger. I hope you have a good night's rest."

With that he went to his own bed with his six-shooter and gun. I took my pistol to bed and tucked the rifle in alongside my right leg, keeping the pistol across my breast with my hand on it, ready for any emergency.

AFTER a little while I heard some one talking, and raised up on my elbow to listen. Through the campfire light I could see the old man on his knees at the side of his bed. I listened intently and a more fervent prayer I never heard.

He asked that the stranger in camp with him that night be protected, and that he might be a good man. After listening to that prayer, I kicked my gun

out of bed, laid my six-shooter at my side, closed my eyes, folded my hands across my breast, and said the little prayer I had learned at my mother's knee. I never slept better.

Next morning I told the old man who I was and what I was after. He was delighted and gave me some useful information. I told him about the deer I had shot the evening before, and he said he would get them, as his business was killing deer, bear and other wild game for their hides and meat. After "jerking" this meat, he would take it to the settlement around Fort Clark, where it would be sold.

This man was a hermit in a true sense of the word, and only a very few persons knew much about him. Afterward I did learn that he had fallen out with his brothers and sisters back in Indiana many years before over the division of an estate. He claimed it had been unfairly divided and refused to accept any part of it. He left his home never to return, choosing the life of a wanderer.

THE second day I picked up my man without much trouble, lower down on Devil River nearer the Rio Grande, and started with him for Bracketville (Fort Clark), Kinney County, fifty miles east.

We stopped at a sheep-camp to stay all night, and after the evening meal we made our beds together. I called the foreman of the camp when we got ready for bed, as all the others were Mexicans. I handcuffed my left hand to the prisoner's right hand and gave the key, pistol and rifle to the foreman, saying: "I will call you if I need you." Of course one doesn't sleep much the first few nights hooked up to a prisoner in that manner, but after a week or so he gets used to it.

All was well in the morning, and we got an early start. It was a fair road and we made good time. My horse seemed to sense that when we turned to the east we were going back to camp. By night we were in Bracketville. Fort Clark, on the hill, loomed up in the distance long before we could see the little town in the valley. I turned my prisoner over to the sheriff. Later a more serious charge was found against him in Pennsylvania, and he was sent back there for trial on that charge.

I started back; but three days more of hard riding through the mountains were necessary to get back to camp, and the boys were just about ready to come out and look me up, when I rode in.

Matabele Battle

A trumpeter at the age of thirteen in the little colonial army which fought off the charges of vast hordes of trained Zulu spearmen.



By MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER

SUPPOSE you had been brought up in the African wilds, accustomed to the saddle from the time you could first sit astride a horse, your only companion your rifle; then, just as you entered your 'teens, how would you like to have gone out as a trumpeter in Cecil Rhodes' army of pioneers that fought and conquered Lobengula, the great king-chief of the Matabeles? That was my experience as a kid, in 1893.

I was born in Constantinople, of British parents. When I was only a few years of age, my father became interested in the British South Africa Company which held large concessions in Matabeleland and Mashonaland, two vast stretches of wild African country which are now united under the British flag in the Colony of Rhodesia. He emigrated there, took up land, and I was brought up on the South African veldt. . . .

Lobengula was the great king-chief of the Matabeles—a branch of the Zulus, who had thrown off the yoke of Chaaka, the bloodthirsty emperor-chief of the Zulus, and emigrated from Zulu-land to north of the British South African colonies many years before. The Matabeles possessed all the courage, all the military ability and all the cruelty of the Zulus, coupled with closer contact with the whites which had made them even more cunning and advanced than their savage brothers of Zulu-land.

The British South Africa Company, headed by Cecil Rhodes, had made treaties with Lobengula by which that

company was permitted to exploit the mines and resources of that portion of the Dark Continent in return for certain favors and emoluments paid him each year. This agreement was rigidly kept for several years, and then Lobengula's people began to think that it would be only a matter of time until the white man, with his desire for land ownership and control and his different methods of living would crowd things up considerably for followers of the African king.

Petty harassments of the settlers began. Perhaps there were abuses on the part of the whites, too. At any rate the Matabeles began inching a little on that treaty. Stock grazing on the veldt would be driven off at night, and the Mashona herdsmen slaughtered. Now and then an isolated farm would be attacked, and the settlers, if fortunate enough to escape with their lives, would have to flee to the nearest military police post for protection. On their return under military escort they would find their crops destroyed, their servants killed, their cattle driven off, and their buildings burned to the ground—the work of long years destroyed in just one night. And such marauding became a tame pastime after a while. Every little while a band of howling savages would descend in the dead of night on some farmhouse. The men would be butchered along with the children; women and grown girls would be carried into a dreadful captivity.

Then it was that Cecil Rhodes decided to start a war on his own account.

Maxim quick-firing guns had just been perfected. These early Maxims fired three hundred rounds a minute; their barrels were encased in a water-jacket to keep them cool, but the water would boil after some two or three minutes of continuous firing. Rhodes sent to England and had a number of them shipped out. He also ordered a few thousand Lee-Metford rifles—bolt-action magazine rifles.

Finally the day came that Lobengula declared war against the English—he decided to drive the white men out, and make a savage Black Empire from the Zambezi River to the Cape of Good Hope.

I was just turned thirteen when Lobengula began his war of extermination. For several years my only companions had been my horses and my rifles. I could ride anything that had four legs, and I could shoot with deadly aim.

THERE were only about two thousand men in the little army recruited and organized by the British South Africa Company to meet the vast armies of Lobengula. Bulawayo, "*the place of the killing*," was the king's kraal, the capital of the country. It was decided to march on Bulawayo, beat the enemy into submission and take Lobengula prisoner.

The little army of whites was divided into four mobile columns, averaging five hundred men in strength, and by four different routes it commenced the long march on Bulawayo, several hundred miles across the veldt. I was made a trumpeter in the Salisbury Horse, which with some troops of the B.S.A. Police, formed one of the columns.

After several days' march we made our first contact with Lobengula and twelve of his *impis* or regiments, each one thousand strong. Remember, there were only five hundred of us. The Matabeles wasted no time in ceremonies, but advanced to attack and overwhelm us by sheer weight of numbers immediately after sighting us in line of march. Our little column was quickly formed in a hollow square, our transport wagons forming a square barricade, our horses and transport oxen, of which sixteen make a team, on the inside. With rifles in readiness we lay under the wagons, a Maxim machine-gun planted at each corner of the square, awaiting the attack.

It was an awe-inspiring sight to watch those twelve *impis* in the old Zulu formation move forward to the attack. We had received orders to hold fire until they were within five-hundred-yard range.

On they came, each *impi* commanded by an *induna* or chief. Every man was six feet or over, with ostrich-feather head-dresses waving in the wind, lion- or leopard-skin *karosses*, their throwing and stabbing assegais, their large buffalo-hide shields; as they marched, their tread shook the very ground, and their voices rose in their sonorous war-chant. Every man a skilled warrior, their *indunas* selected for bravery in action, the Matabeles were terrible enemies at close range. As to their bravery, among both the Matabeles and the Zulus from which they were an outbranch, cowardice on the field of action meant death by torture on return to their home kraals. Chaaka on one occasion had ordered five entire *impis* to throw themselves over a cliff for what he considered cowardice; with other *impis* lining both sides of the trail, these five regiments in full war panoply marched up a hillside, and as they reached the top, in line of battle formation gave their last war-chant and leaped to death over a thousand-foot precipice. . . .

The twelve *impis* attacked in waves, one following the other at a distance of about fifty yards. In attacking, the Matabeles always formed their *impis* in crescent formation. In the center the crescent would be ten men deep, thinning out to one solitary warrior at the extremity of each horn. In this formation they closed in on the enemy; and as the heavier mass in the center struck home, the thinner horns closed inward and enveloped the victims.

Whilst many of the Matabeles had trade guns or stolen rifles, their main weapons on which they depended were their assegais or spears. Each warrior carried three long-handled throwing-assegais, which were thrown like javelins when within proper distance of the enemy; with these gone, they closed in with the stabbing-assegai, a short-handled weapon with a blade ten or twelve inches long and four inches wide; these blades rose and fell in an orgy of slaughter.

I was but a boy, a scant thirteen years of age; and as I saw those awe-inspiring warriors, their weapons glittering in the sun, approach nearer and nearer, my heart rose in my throat, and I gripped my rifle with tense fingers. Then, all in a second, the suspense was broken. The Matabele *impis* suddenly broke from their stride into their terrible charge; their shouts shook the air; they rushed on our devoted little band like a whirlwind of death; and in that moment the

order "*Fire!*" ran along our four-sided lines. The first *impi* was within the five-hundred-yard range when we opened up on it with magazine-rifle and machine-gun fire; the charging *impi* seemed to melt away as its warriors dropped by the hundred. Then suddenly it was gone, and the second wave was advancing.

On they came, one Matabele *impi* behind another, marching forward to certain death. Into their close ranks we poured a continuous hail of bullets, until the barrels of our rifles were almost too hot to hold. And still they came on, disdainful, superb in their courage. Each *impi* closed in a little nearer, and yet nearer, before it seemed to melt away under our fire; they had reached now to within two hundred yards of our lines.

In front of us was a veritable wall of dead and dying savages, and over these the charging warriors had to climb, and in the face of our fire the wall piled higher and higher. Finally, with six *impis* destroyed, almost annihilated, the iron courage of the Matabeles broke. They wavered, hesitated, turned and fled. If they had only known, if perhaps two more *impis* had advanced on us, it might have been a different tale. Our rifles were almost red-hot in our hands, our machine-guns too hot for further firing.

The battle had lasted a bare thirty minutes; almost six thousand Matabele warriors were lying dead or wounded in front of us; I never saw so many dead men again or at such close quarters in all the many campaigns I was destined to go through afterward.

We had not lost a man in the action, although a couple of our scouts had lost their lives in locating the enemy. We were too spent to follow the retreating *impis* that day; besides, we had that enormous mass of dead men to dispose of—we couldn't leave them to the jackals and hyenas, not to speak of the vultures who began to circle around in the air above the dead. And that was some fatigue party, to dig a big enough trench to bury nearly six thousand warriors!

NEXT morning we resumed our march, and within forty-eight hours made another contact with our retreating foes, whose numbers were now augmented by another half-dozen *impis*. But it was the same tale over again; we waited their charge, confident of our ability to sustain the shock; and again some five or six thousand of the enemy died before stampeding in headlong flight.

Our other columns converging on Bulowayo from different directions had met with little opposition; they had been in action with single *impis* only; it was a queer fact about this little war that our column made all the general engagements, bore the brunt of the fighting, and actually conquered the Matabele nation.

For several days we marched on, our horses carrying us some thirty miles nearer to Bulowayo day by day; our big South African transport-wagons creaking along the dusty trails and over the rock-strewn veldt, drawn by teams of sixteen big oxen, a little black boy ten or eleven years of age holding the nose-thongs of the leading pair, a big black man trudging by the wagon and every now and then flourishing his long bull-whip. And without sighting the enemy again, we eventually came in sight of our objective, the kraal of the great king, Bulowayo, the "place of the killing!"

Bulowayo in those days was the largest Matabele town, an assemblage of native huts arranged in circles a dozen or more deep surrounding the king's private enclosure in the center. The central space was comparatively large, and contained the king's private quarters, the three hundred and sixty-five houses of his wives, the council-chamber where he received and held conferences with his *indunas*, the quarters of the witch-doctors, and the great parade-ground where the *impis* paraded in all their glory before marching off to war, and where the witch-doctors held their terrible sessions and where the torturings and executions took place. The central royal enclosure was surrounded by a stockade some twenty feet high, and the outer circumference of the entire town by another stockade twelve feet in height. Bulowayo contained some twenty thousand families.

As we drew near, we heard the stamping of warriors' feet engaged in their war dance, and the screams and yells of the witch-doctors exhorting them to overwhelm us. Soon we were sighted by their look-outs, and they began to pour forth from the stockaded town, *impi* after *impi*.

Again it was the same story. Led by Lobengula himself, a brave warrior standing seven feet tall in his bare feet, a black Hercules of noble proportions, the *impis* charged toward us with thunderous tread, their battle-cries resounding above the din of rifle and machine-gun fire. On they came, one *impi* after another; and as they reached the fatal five-hundred-yard range, they met that hail

of fiery flying death, and their ranks melted away like corn before the sickle.

And still they came on, shouting defiance in the very acme of human bravery. The seventh *impi* weathered the two-hundred-yard range, and reached to within a hundred yards of us before they in their turn melted away; and behind them was the eighth *impi*, a yelling horde of charging warriors bearing straight down on us. Our hearts were in our throats; our rifles blistered our hands; but still we fought on; if that charge reached home, we were lost! In thunderous march they reached the fifty-yard range; flying assegais came soaring through the air, and several of our men received them in their breasts or throats and went down. Other assegais flew over the wagon-tops and found a target in the bodies of horses or oxen; the screams of wounded horses and the moans of wounded oxen added to the turmoil; we thought it was all over with us.

Then, at fifty yards, this *impi* melted away; but only a few yards behind came the ninth *impi*. Many of our men were wounded now; our case seemed hopeless, but we fought on with the courage of desperation; the *impi* passed the fifty-yard range; they came forward in headlong charge. Half of them were down, and still they came on; with blood-thirsty yells the last hundred warriors reached the line of wagons, and a score of our men were hacked to pieces with the broad-bladed stabbing-assegais before the last Matabele went down under our rifle-fire.

But we were not yet safe. Fifty yards behind came the tenth *impi*, hurling defiance in our teeth. Again our machine-guns and rifles belched forth their fiery stream of death; again the *impi* melted away by hundreds; but on they came, and this time at least a quarter of them reached the line of wagons. We rose up and met them with the bayonet, and for a few moments it was touch and go. Fifty of our men went down; I gave myself up for lost as a tremendous savage came straight at me; my rifle jammed; I was only a kid, and I shut my eyes and screamed. But in that instant I was knocked to the ground by the impact of the falling savage; he had been shot through the head by Major Forbes, who had been standing beside me.

The breath was knocked out of me, and I was stunned for a moment or two; when I regained my senses, I found myself pinned to the ground by the weight

of this huge dead warrior. Major Forbes and a trooper were pulling him off my body; my face was streaming with blood. My wound proved superficial; the assegai falling from the dead savage's hand had pierced the bridge of my nose and splintered the bone, but I was bleeding freely. The fight was over. As soon as my face was washed and my wound dressed, I found that we had won; the remnant of the Matabele hordes were in headlong retreat. Our column reformed—we had lost nearly a hundred men—we rode into Bulowayo and burned the kraal of the great king to the ground.

A makeshift flag-pole was hastily set up, and the British Union Jack went aloft; I sounded a fanfare on my trumpet, and tried to play God Save the Queen, but made a hash of it—I was a rotten trumpeter, anyway, but it was necessary for me to hold some rank on the regimental roster. The column presented arms; and Bulowayo, kraal of the Great King of Matabeleland, was taken possession of in the name of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India! God Save the Queen!

LOBENGULA with his one remaining *impi* had fled north; and we followed his trail for days. One evening toward sunset we reached the banks of the Shangani River. During the dry season the Shangani, like other South African rivers, is merely a dry river-bed, about two hundred yards from bank to bank, which are steep and average from twenty to forty feet in height; in the center of this river-bed is usually a little streamlet of water possibly five or six feet in width and not more than eighteen inches deep. At the places where a trail crosses these rivers there is usually a cut in the banks, down which travelers with their wagons pass. These fording-places are known in Southern Africa by the name of "drifts."

We reached the Shangani at sunset and camped for the night. The river-bed was dry, and some of our scouts who had penetrated across the river returned with the news that Lobengula with a bare handful of men, a few *indunas* and some thirty warriors, was encamped at a kraal some four to five miles across the river. If Lobengula could be captured before he could secure reinforcements, the war would be over. Major Allan Wilson of my regiment called for a score of volunteers to cross the river with him before darkness set in, and capture the king.

Everybody wanted to go. I was turned down because of my youth, but a party of twenty-one officers and men were selected, and they crossed. A couple of hours later a native runner came back to camp with the news that Major Wilson and his party had marched four miles, had located the kraal in which the king and his chiefs were resting, and that they had encamped without fires or lights, intending to attack at daybreak.

During the night a terrific African thunderstorm broke over the veldt. Lightning lit up the skies for miles in every direction; the rain came down in torrents. In the morning the Shangani, which Wilson and his men had crossed almost dry-shod the night before, was a raging torrent from bank to bank. The swirling waters were thirty or more feet deep, racing madly along carrying everything before them. It was impossible to cross the river; men, horses, oxen, wagons, would have been overwhelmed by the flood. And four days were to pass before the river became fordable.

Soon after daybreak we heard the sound of gun-fire in the distance; we saw an *impi* far away across the river; we saw another and yet another *impi*; and we knew that the fate of our comrades who had ridden out so bravely the previous evening was a foregone conclusion. We heard the distant firing rise and swell; we heard the firing die down until not a sound disturbed the stillness of the African veldt. And we knew that Major Allan Wilson and his little band of heroes had given their lives for the cause of the empire.

But it was only from the Matabeles themselves that the actual story was finally gathered. Major Wilson and his men had located the king's resting-place that night; and the king's men had located the little white encampment. Lobengula, contrary to the reports of the scouts, had three complete *impis* with him: three thousand of the bravest fighting men in all Africa. He had sent one *impi* to guard the river-bank and cut off their retreat; this was the *impi* we had seen on the march on the morning of that fateful day; the river being in flood, their services were not needed, and they had marched off to join their comrades before our very eyes. The other two *impis* we had seen in the distance were the main body of the king's forces.

With the morning's dawn Major Wilson had soon ascertained the true facts concerning the number of Lobengula's

warriors. He saw the hopelessness of his own position; he saw that all retreat was cut off. Those twenty-one doomed men drew their horses into a circle and shot them, thus forming a bulwark all around them. Then they took cover behind their dead horses to fight it out until their last cartridge was gone.

The Matabeles attacked soon after daylight. The first *impi* strode forward chanting their war-song, and the rifles of the doomed men took their toll. But twenty-one men couldn't hold three thousand at bay; as long as their ammunition lasted, they kept up a brave fight; but their numbers gradually grew less. To the credit of the Matabele nation, brave men who could admire other brave men fighting their last fight, only one *impi* attacked; the other two *impis* formed on the sidelines cheering on both friends and foes with their guttural war-chants.

This was the firing we had heard that morning; whilst we had seen the crescent-shaped *impis* marching and counter-marching in the distance, we could not see the actual fighting, because the conflict took place just out of sight over a low roll in the ground. . . .

Finally, of Wilson's little band only seven were left alive; their ammunition was exhausted, their last shot fired. And those seven stood up within their horse-flesh barricade, back to back, heads erect, and sang "God Save the Queen!" as the *impi* charged home and the assegais were painted red with their blood.

THERE were a few skirmishes with the remnants of the Matabele hordes after this. Lobengula himself, with a few *indunas* and a handful of men, sought refuge in the fastnesses of the Matopopo Hills. There he died of smallpox, and his *indunas* made peace with the company. The Matabele War was over. But while it lasted, I had ridden my horse, sounded my trumpet, and taken my place in the firing-lines in every engagement. I had done a man's work and I received a campaign medal for the Matabele War.

Bulawayo is today once again a capital—but the capital of the British Colony of Rhodesia. It is a city with electric lights, telephones, sewage system, bathrooms, newspapers, and all the other comforts of our modern civilization. Cecil Rhodes lies buried in the Matopopo Hills, on a spot called in the Matabele language the "World's View." His vision of a British section of Africa stretching from the Cape to Cairo is an accomplished fact.

A Wanderer's Scrapbook

(Continued from page 5)

got five dollars; if you didn't you "Got the Hook." When the audience howled, a long stick with a hook in the end was thrust out from the wing, and you were ignominiously pulled into the darkness.

I was hungry, and I went there with a man who told me about the five-dollar prize. He was, so he said, a fine tenor, and he was going to try for the money.

He tried, all right, but the crowd thought little of it. He was hauled back into the wings, and then hunger pushed me forward.

I couldn't sing, but as a youngster I had been presented with a lot of trashy books as prizes for reciting. I offered to recite "Rio Grande's Last Race."

They were evidently not believers in the occult. At the top of my lungs I shouted:

*"Dead men on horses long since dead—
They clustered on the track,
The warriors of the days long fled,
They moved around with noiseless tread—
Bay, chestnut, brown, and black!"*

"The hook!" screamed the crowd. "Give it to him! The hook!"

I got it. It curled around my neck and I was dragged into the darkness.

"You've got the manner," said the proprietor, consolingly, "but they don't like the way you talk. You're some sort of a furriner, aint yer?"

Next day it was snowing heavily, and as snow shovelers were getting twenty-five cents an hour, I applied for a job. The boss thought I lacked the physique.

As I was moving away, he said: "S'y, do you allus talk like dat or wus yer jest puttin' it on?"

I admitted that it was my usual manner of speech, and he kindly offered me advice. "A boid who talks like dat'll get nowhere here," he said. "Now, I'm from Noo Joisey, an' you see de difference immejity in my chatter an' yours."

I admitted that I did. He was so pleased at my immediate recognition of his superior diction that he gave me a quarter and told me to come back next day, when he might be able to place me.

I didn't go back. I got a job at window-cleaning.

A LITTLE later a nice old lady offered me a job. She was seventy-three years of age and had the sweetest face I

have ever seen. I did a few odd jobs for her during my second week in the United States, and one day she called me in for a private conference. Was I broke? I said I had fifteen cents. Was I game? I grinned and answered that I was game enough to run when the odds were against me.

"And you want to get on in America?" she murmured.

"Sure," I answered.

She leaned toward me and spoke in a whisper. "These two houses I own," she said. "A firestick thrust into them one night would bring me twenty-five thousand. A bright boy like yourself could do it. It'd be a ten-dollar bill in your empty pocket."

That was a ten-dollar bill I let slide. But I still think of her sweet old face!

IN 1916 I went back to America. Taking a walk in New Jersey, I spoke to a farmer who had never been more than ten miles from his own house. We yarned by the roadside, and I am frank enough to say that I bragged about my own travels and what I had seen.

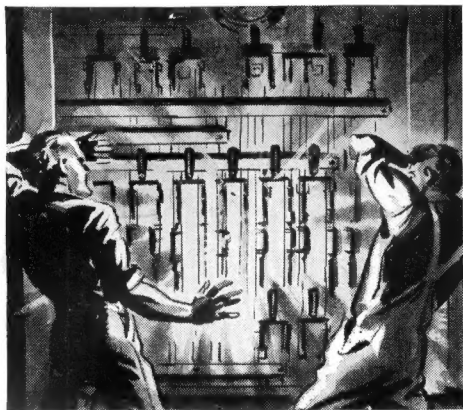
"Well, well," said the farmer, "everything seems to have happened to you, and nothing has ever happened to me."

A youth of eighteen called him to his lunch at that moment, and I shouldered my knapsack to walk on. The farmer rubbed his head and looked at the boy. "The night he was born, something happened that you might like to hear, Mister," he said.

I heard it, went back to New York, typed it quickly and sold it to a magazine. Here it is in a few words: There was a snowstorm on that particular night, and when the farmer had walked three miles to call the doctor, he found that the medico, who was a bachelor and a ladies' man, had been shot through the thigh and was dying on the floor of his surgery.

The farmer, at the doctor's direction, tied the severed artery, took the physician on his shoulders and carried him the three miles to the house. The boy was born half an hour after his arrival, and an hour later the doctor died in the parlor of the farm house. "You'll pass his grave on the road to Whippany," said the farmer. "My ol' woman goes down there every week and puts flowers on it."

Panic Loomed...The Show Went On!

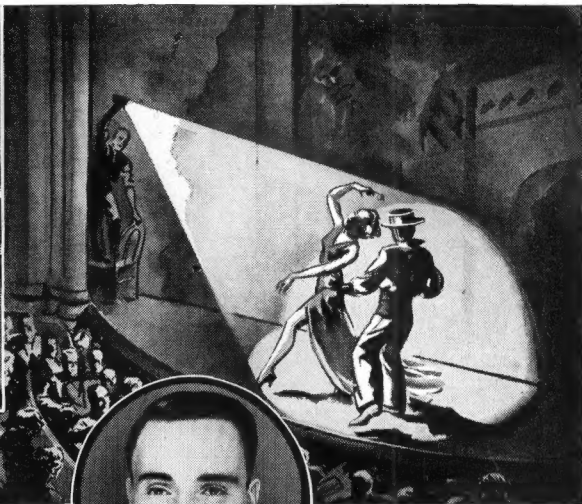


Crowded Theatre Goes Dark as Fuse Blows

"The dog-and-pony number was finishing," writes Stage Manager Frank M. Polhamius, Jr., of 195 Fuller Lane, Winnetka, Ill., "when an overloaded main fuse blew out. As the stage went black, panic threatened the lives of thousands crowding the full house.

"Part of my equipment as stage manager is my trusty 'Eveready' flashlight. Before the audience could sense that anything was wrong, I called for the curtain, dashed to the wings and played my flashlight on the apron of the stage like a baby spot.

"Fortunately, a dance team was ready to go on. In a split second they were on the stage and going through their routine in the spot furnished by my flashlight. DATED 'Eveready' batteries in that



flashlight had lighted my way around dark theatres for many weeks before they

were called upon to meet this spine-chilling emergency. So you can bet I realized in those critical moments just how much it can mean to buy batteries that are *fresh* and full of life. No one can ever know how many lives were saved by DATED 'Eveready' batteries that night.

(Signed)

Frank M. Polhamius Jr.



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Hollywood's Most Polished Voice

HERBERT MARSHALL* TELLS HOW THE THROAT-STRAIN OF ACTING CALLS FOR A LIGHT SMOKE

"In a recent scene," says Herbert Marshall, "I talk two minutes on the telephone. This scene took half a day to 'shoot'—four hours of painstaking voice shading. But even after scenes like this, I find that Luckies are always gentle on my throat. It's only common sense for an actor—or anyone else, for that matter—to want a light smoke."

The reason that Mr. Marshall—and you—find Luckies a light smoke is that the "Toasting" process takes out certain throat irritants found in all tobacco—even the finest.

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*Co-starring with Barbara Stanwyck
in RKO's "A Love Like That"

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